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JESUS CHRIST
THE KING OF OUR HEARTS

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"O come and let us worship Christ, of all nations Lord, Alleluia!"—*Invitatory, Office of Corpus Christi.*

JESUS CHRIST THE KING OF OUR HEARTS

ELEVATIONS ON THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

BY

VERY REV. ALEXIS M. LEPICIER, O.S.M.
Consultor of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, etc.

"*For He must reign.*" (1 *Cor. xv.* 25.)



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✠PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.
Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, August 1, 1921

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TO
THE LOVING MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER
WHO FIRST TAUGHT ME
TO KNOW, LOVE, ADORE
THE DIVINE KING AND SOVEREIGN
OF OUR HEARTS
L. D.

TO OUR BELOVED SON
ALEXIS MARY LEPICIER
PRIOR GENERAL OF THE ORDER
OF SERVANTS OF MARY
BENEDICT XV POPE

Beloved Son: Health and Apostolic Blessing.

With sentiments of deep pleasure We have received that work of yours of small proportions but profound in ideas, in which with easy and clear reasoning and with arguments drawn from theological sources you show that Jesus Christ is King of all mankind. What gives Us particular satisfaction is that, in developing and illustrating the nature of His kingdom, which He has by virtue of divine right, you have established the duty incumbent on each of us, on the family, and on society at large of consecrating themselves to His most Sacred Heart. And you easily persuade all who read your book to do so, such is the sweet odor of piety which it breathes forth.

Whilst, then, We give you thanks for the volume you have offered Us, We bestow Our full approval on the act which We hear you are about to accomplish; viz., to consecrate the entire Order, of which you are the Superior, to the divine Heart of Jesus Christ. It is, in fact, most fitting that those chiefly who profess a special devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows, should devote themselves in a particular manner to the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ Who has suffered so much for us, for nothing is dearer to Mary, the Sorrowful Mother, than that her clients should faithfully serve her Son.

Nor can We doubt but that this solemn manifestation of tender homage to the Sacred Heart, Fount of life and holiness, will bring a great increase of virtue to the Religious of your Order. As a token of this wish and an expression of Our fatherly benevolence toward you, We impart to you, and to all the Religious of your illustrious Order, Our Apostolic Blessing.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, on the second of February, Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year of grace 1920, the sixth of Our Pontificate.

(Signed) BENEDICT XV, POPE.

FOREWORD

SOME time ago, while on a visit in one of our monasteries, I was invited to give a sermon on the Sacred Heart of Jesus in our church there. The opportunity arose at the inauguration of a statue destined to commemorate the consecrating of local Catholic families to the Sacred Heart. I willingly answered this kind invitation, and wishing to instruct the faithful in the true significance of the homage they were paying, I set about to study the inner meaning of this beautiful devotion, a devotion which has latterly spread itself in so marvelous a manner over all the world.

Indeed, the first thought which devotion to the Sacred Heart suggests to our minds is that of infinite love on the part of our divine Redeemer. It was this love which urged Him to give Himself entirely to us in His passion and death, as well as in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It appeared to me equally manifest that this devotion, while

it reminds us of the love of Jesus toward us, is ordained to inspire our hearts with the flame of reciprocal love, and this is especially shown in the imitation of those virtues which chiefly adorn that loving Heart, the virtues of humility and charity.

However, it seemed to me that still more could be said about this devotion, if only it were studied in relationship to the Sacred Person of our divine Redeemer. In fact, considering the nature of the homage paid to the Heart of Jesus in the twofold light of faith and theology, I found in it a newer and higher signification, perhaps not so obvious as the first, but certainly not less true and appropriate. This signification is the regal dignity and sovereignty of the Heart of Jesus over our hearts, a truth fitly expressed in the well-known invocation: "Heart of Jesus, the King and Center of all hearts," *Cor Jesu Rex et Centrum omnium cordium.*

Now the relationship between us and the Sacred Heart of Jesus is based on the fact that our divine Redeemer has been set over us as King and Sovereign by His eternal Father. But unlike temporal sovereigns, who

wield their power by force, Jesus Christ holds His blissful court in our hearts, bending them gently, yet overpoweringly whithersoever He will. That His ends may be accomplished, it is enough that we should refrain from hindering the operation of His divine grace and let ourselves be guided by Him, conforming our lives to His life and our desires to His desires.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, considered in this light, includes all He did and suffered to gain His sway over our hearts. It sums up all we should do, as subjects, to share in the fruits of the Redemption. The love which Jesus bears us, symbolized by the living flame leaping forth from His Heart, earned Him the glorious title of King of our hearts. Likewise, by submitting ourselves entirely to Him as His servants and subjects, we become His purchased people.

This idea, certainly not new, but perhaps somewhat neglected, was what I sought to set forth to my audience, not only in the discourse I had been asked to give, but in a series of sermons which followed it.

In these I endeavored to show how our di-

vine Saviour was predestined by His eternal Father and foretold by the prophets to be the future King of our hearts; how He came into the world in that capacity; how He was so recognized by men of good will throughout His mortal life; how for this cause He was condemned to death by Pilate at the instigation of the Jews, though at the same time His regal dignity was solemnly proclaimed by both His friends and His enemies; how He died a martyr to this truth, and how He continues to exercise His regal power in this world. From which it follows that if we wish to receive the ample benefits of the Redemption, we should submit our hearts entirely to Him, open them to the influence of His grace, and abandon ourselves absolutely to His holy dispositions in our regard.

The spiritual pleasure which I found in studying up and setting forth these consolatory truths, induced me to put in writing what I had preached from the pulpit, in the hope of bringing many to realize what the Heart of Jesus is for each one of us. I therefore rearranged these sermons and divided them so

as to form thirty chapters which might serve for spiritual reading or meditation in the month of June, which is more especially consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Our Saviour.

These pages were already written when, on the sixth of January, 1918, it was my enviable lot to hear that sublime truth of the sovereignty of the Heart of Jesus over all mankind proclaimed to the world by the mouth of our Holy Father Benedict XV himself. This day which reminds us of the solemn homage paid to the King of the Jews by the holy Magi, had been fixed for the reading of the Decree acknowledging the miracles wrought through the intercession of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, in view of the canonization of this distinguished propagator of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On this occasion, the Sovereign Pontiff took the opportunity of proclaiming in noble and almost inspired words this consolatory truth of the sovereignty of the Heart of Jesus over mankind. In the meantime, he expressed his opinion that the fact of the canonization of the virgin of Paray-le-Monial, which was soon to

take place, would serve to mark a period of greater development in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"Oh, if all families," exclaimed the Holy Father, "would consecrate themselves to the divine Heart, and if all would fulfill the duties attached to such a consecration, the reign of Jesus Christ over human society would be assured. And should We not rejoice to see the cause of so desirable an effect, as is the canonization of Blessed Margaret Mary now taking place? . . . From the dawn we foretell the noon; and We, in this most auspicious practice of consecrating families to the Sacred Heart, salute the dawn of that longed-for noon in which the sovereignty of Jesus Christ shall be recognized by every one. We repeat with confident exultation the words of St. Paul: 'He must reign.'[1] Oh, what a new manifestation of His love is this which is made to-day, on the Feast of the Epiphany, a feast destined to commemorate the first disclosing which the incarnate Word made of Himself to our first Fathers in the Faith! On that first Epiphany were laid the foundations of the social kingdom

[1] 1 Cor. XV, 25.

of Jesus Christ. Oh, may the Epiphany we celebrate to-day assure the extension and stability of this His kingdom!"

In hearing such noble words we could not but rejoice, seeing sanctioned by supreme authority the principle of the sovereignty of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of His reign over our hearts and souls. At the same time, it seemed to us a remarkable occurrence to hear the reigning Sovereign Pontiff take up, complete and more clearly define the warm appeal which Leo XIII twenty-two years ago directed to the world, when he invited all to consecrate themselves to the adorable Heart of Jesus as King and Sovereign of their hearts. Such is the bond of union which links together the teaching of the succeeding Roman Pontiffs.

Now it is for us to hasten the fulfillment of this desire regarding the speedy advent of the social kingdom of Jesus Christ. This each of us may do by the holiness of our lives, bearing, as it were, graven on our foreheads, the divine impress of our submission to this King of Love, and so, manifesting the fact of His sovereignty over our hearts. Furthermore, we may do this, though in different degrees, by the apos-

tolate of words, inducing as many as are under our influence, to choose this loving Lord as King and Center of their own hearts.

Now it should not be believed that there can be, in the Christian life, any class of people even though bound to God by solemn religious vows, to whom this form of consecration and this apostolate can be said to be extraneous. Should any one imagine devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, King of our hearts, to be either contrary or extraneous to any other form of devotion approved of or encouraged by the Church, he would certainly have ill understood the workings of the spiritual life. This is particularly the case as regards devotion to our blessed Lady. If there is a soul which should show itself intensely devout to the Sacred Heart of Our Saviour, certainly it should be the soul which has, by solemn promises, consecrated itself to the service of the glorious co-Redemptress of the human race.

Indeed, the sorrows which transfixed the soul of our blessed Lady had their origin in her seeing the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over

man's heart fiercely and with diabolical devices opposed and combated. This opposition to the kingdom of her Son over souls and over society was the chief motive of all her anguish and of all the affliction of her maternal heart. It was for the purpose of coöperating with the future Redeemer of the world in establishing His Kingdom on earth that she consented to become His Mother, and in so doing to drink the bitter chalice of her own maternal compassion. Likewise, it was in order to secure a race of devout subjects that Jesus from His cross entrusted us to Mary, who accepted with perfect submission the high office of Mother of men.

To put it shortly, what is the meaning of devotion to the Sorrows of our blessed Lady; what is its intimate reason; what the aim to which tend the practices of this devotion so highly recommended by the Church and so universally spread throughout the world, if not to wage war on sin, the one obstacle to the reign of Jesus Christ over our souls and over society; to bestir ourselves to fight the battles of faith and to bring about by our good works

the coming of His kingdom over our hearts, through grace in time and through glory in eternity?

Devotion to our blessed Lady, co-Redemptress of the human race, should not therefore be looked upon as an obstacle to worshiping in a special manner the Sacred Heart of Jesus, King and Sovereign of our hearts. For the tribute of homage we offer to the Queen of martyrs finds its natural complement in the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of her Son.

It should also be added that Jesus' Mother naturally shared the regal dignity of her Son; for the Church, spread throughout the world, exultingly salutes her as our glorious Queen: *Salve Regina.* For, as St. Athanasius beautifully puts it: "As He who was born from the Virgin is King, Lord and God, so the Mother who bore Him is fitly and truly named Queen, Lady and Mother of God." [1] But this is not the place to discuss the regal dignity of Mary. This theme deserves a treatise by itself. We must confine ourselves to speaking of Our Lord Jesus Christ who, as St. Paul so

[1] Sermo in Evangel. *de Deipara.*

powerfully urges, "must reign," *oportet illum regnare,*[1] over our hearts.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus reign over the Christian Family, infusing into it that peace which rejoiced the Holy Family of Nazareth; may it reign over society, calling it back, humble and penitent, to the throne of God; may it reign over every Christian heart, rendering it amenable to the divine command, and like to Jesus Christ Himself. May that day come speedily when all mankind, recognizing Jesus Christ as their beloved Sovereign, may perfectly submit themselves, all the affections of their hearts, all their thoughts and desires to Him, as King and Center of all hearts. Thus did the holy Magi who, attracted by the marvelous star to the humble crib of Jesus, worshiped Him as their Supreme Lord, and offered Him, with their precious treasures, their persons and their hearts. So may we, following their example, realize in ourselves the truth of the invocation: *Cor Jesu, Rex et Centrum omnium cordium.*

ROME, March 1, 1921.

(Being the forty-first anniversary of my clothing in the Order of the Servants of Mary.)

[1] 1 Cor. XV, 25.

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JESUS CHRIST THE KING OF OUR HEARTS

"For he must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet." (I Cor. XV, 25.)

CHAPTER I

THE HEART OF JESUS, MASTERPIECE OF THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

AMONG all the works of the right hand of the Almighty, none more signally shows the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Creator than the sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. As this most holy and blessed Humanity was to be assumed by the Word in the unity of person that it might be the instrument of our Redemption, God, in forming it, brought to bear all the resources of His infinite art, enriching it with such gifts and privileges of nature and grace, as to make it the special object of His divine complacency. And so the Humanity

of our divine Saviour became the epitome and, as it were, the center of all the marvels of the universe, shining like a brilliant sun throughout ages and illuminating not only the vast human race, but innumerable ranks of angels, who never weary of contemplating its divine beauty.

But what most attracts our gaze and captivates our affection in the Humanity of Jesus is His most Sacred Heart. From the moment when this Heart was pierced on the cross by the lance and there issued forth water and blood, even to this day, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has exercised such an irresistible influence over souls that none of those who seek the Kingdom of God in truth and justice can resist its potent attraction.

In these latter days, however, the faithful have taken refuge in greater numbers and more confidently than ever in this loving Heart, consecrating themselves entirely to its service and proclaiming it King of their own hearts. In fact, there is hardly a city or hamlet where the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is unknown. The name alone, at once potent and sweet, acts as a trumpet-call to

rally His soldiers to Our Lord, and as a word of command at which all souls press forward to fight in the warfare of Heaven. Now the marvelous spread of the devotion of the faithful to the Sacred Heart can certainly not have been brought about by chance. We must needs see in it the irresistible impulse of the Divine Spirit who wishes to open for us in this wholesome devotion an inexhaustible source of grace and salvation.

A Christian who wishes to draw from that pure fount, which is devotion to the Sacred Heart of Our Redeemer, the water of salvation, should, in the first place, penetrate the purpose of God in proposing this adorable Heart to our homage and affection, and next, endeavor to understand its high spiritual significance. Let us see what this significance is.

Jesus Christ, our beloved Lord, is presented to us in Holy Scripture under a threefold aspect: as Prophet, Priest and King.—As Prophet, because full, as He was, of the spirit and power of God, He revealed the future, knew the secrets of all hearts, commanded nature, healed the sick and cast out devils. As

Priest, because being chosen by His Father for the office of Redeemer that He might ransom with His precious blood the human race from the bondage of the devil, He offered Himself on the tree of the cross, at once Priest and Victim, in expiation for our sins. As King and Sovereign, because we have been entrusted to Him, that He may guide us where He wills and command us as His subjects.

Now to this office of King and Sovereign which we recognize in Jesus Christ, is bound up the devotion to His most Sacred Heart. It is, therefore, our duty to try and understand that to be devout to the Sacred Heart means to submit ourselves entirely to His loving guidance and to fulfill in everything not only His commands but His desires as well. And in this way we shall, as far as in us lies, answer the love shown us, a love which urged Him to utter those moving words: *Behold this Heart which has so loved men.*

And thou, O blessed Mother of Jesus, Mother of fair love, lit up beyond all other intelligent creatures by the glittering rays and gentle heat of the loving Heart of thy Son, whom the Church invokes as "Our Lady of the

Sacred Heart," inspire us with such feelings of devotion toward thy adorable Son, open our hearts so widely to the gracious influence of His beams, that we may be able *"to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth"* [1] of the charity that dwells in His Heart, who is King and Center of all hearts. *Cor Jesu, Rex et Centrum omnium cordium.*

[1] Ephes. III, 18.

CHAPTER II

THE HEART OF JESUS, FOUNTAIN OF ALL GOOD, IS WORTHY OF BEING KING OF OUR HEARTS

THE Sacred Heart of Jesus epitomizes in itself all that the Saviour has done to redeem us, all He has suffered to start and guide us on the way of salvation, all that we expect from Him that we may be infinitely happy in the life to come. This divine Heart is the Victim immolated for our sins, *Cor Jesu, Victima peccatorum;* it is the pattern we must copy in order to arrive at supernatural virtue, *Cor Jesu, virtutum omnium abyssus;* it is the delight of all the saints, *Cor Jesu, deliciae sanctorum omnium.* Beginning, middle and end of our spiritual life and our eternal happiness —all this the adorable Heart of Jesus is for us.

Now, seeing that this divine Heart is for us the fount of all good, it is only just that it should be the King of all our Hearts. And this is the dignity to which the eternal Father

has predestined Jesus Christ, a dignity which Jesus Himself exercised during His mortal life, and which He will exercise until the end of time. In the full sway of His regal power over our hearts, and in our entire submission to His strong and gentle rule, the practical meaning of devotion to the Sacred Heart of our loving Saviour consists. In this devotion, while we acknowledge the infinite love He bears us, we give solemn homage to Him whose hands hold the keys of our hearts and proclaim, in the face of the world, His right to rule over us.

This truth of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over the heart of man recalls this other truth, that it is our strict duty to recognize, love and adore Him as King of our hearts, as indeed He is; submitting ourselves entirely to Him and conforming our whole lives to His desires.

Jesus Christ was by His eternal Father constituted King of all mankind, but His kingdom is not like that of earthly kings, who wield their power by force of arms and the display of troops. The rule of Jesus is much more powerful and efficacious because it is exercised by the irresistible force of love. Jesus reigns:

but He wishes us to feel His power under the guise of love. His weapon is a charity unfeigned, and he who is conquered by this divine Heart is far more happy in his defeat than the proudest warrior is in his victory and triumph.

Happy is he who lets himself be conquered by the charm of Jesus Christ's personality, and surrenders to Him protesting himself His devout servant and subject. Nothing better could befall him. As this divine Sovereign of hearts is the noblest and most lovable of kings, so to be His subject is the highest dignity to which a man can aspire.

Never has the world seen a greater marvel of excellence and generosity than that displayed by our loving Saviour. His exalted dignity was never accompanied by arrogance or harshness, and His modesty and humility were without affectation or baseness. Although He waged war against sin and reproved the pride of the Pharisee with outspoken freedom, His indignation was not, for that, allied to passion, nor His severity divorced from tenderness. He was gentle without weakness and firm without ostentation;

always kind and considerate toward the poor and unfortunate. He inspired all who approached Him in simplicity with unlimited confidence. Never, in word or deed, did He lose His peace of mind or part with that natural dignity and nobility of bearing which proved Him to be of more than human origin.

Above all, there breathed from the Sacred Person of Our Redeemer an ineffable kindness and sweetness. Although His benefits were extended to all, still the greater part of His affectionate care was for children, for the poor and for the afflicted. He was full of solicitude for His apostles. When He saw them attacked He took their side. He wept over the sorrow of a poor widow and over the desolation of a sister bereaved of her fond brother. He wished children to come to Him, and delighted in their straightforwardness and simplicity, blessing them with the fullness of His Heart. For every misery, whether spiritual or material, He knew how to find solace and comfort; and even toward His avowed enemies He displayed extraordinary tolerance and meekness.

Although His wisdom astonished the multi-

tude and His prudence confounded the most elaborate plots, He did not disdain to converse familiarly with His rough apostles. With infinite patience He made them masters of the things of God and lifted their hearts above this wretched world. After having worked the most stupendous miracles, He abased Himself with deep humility before the divine Majesty, now invoking it for Himself and for others, now adoring it with religious reverence and submitting Himself to it with perfect resignation. He never sought honors. Rather, did He look down on the world's esteem. His detachment from worldly goods was perfect, and His patience superior to all kinds of trial. He did not live to Himself, and His only wish was the honor of His Father and the good of His neighbor.

Who, considering so great and noble a King, at the same time so kind and gentle, could fail to enlist under His banner and choose Him for Sovereign Lord and Master, obeying His commands and serving Him with all loyalty?

As the magnet attracts iron, and amber straw, so we should let ourselves be attracted by this loving King of our hearts, whether we

be like iron for hardness or straw for flimsiness and weakness of spirit. Let us always remain at the feet of this gentle Saviour, saying with the Spouse of the Canticles: *"I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him: and I will not let him go."* [1]

O adorable Heart of Jesus, most loving Redeemer of the human race, give me to understand this profound and consoling truth, that it is the will of Thy Father that Thou shouldst reign over my heart, taking entire possession and exercising absolute authority over me, leading me to a complete conformity to Thy desires. O Jesus, my supreme and powerful King, I wish Thee to be my King and my Lord always. To Thee I give my heart; do with me what Thou pleasest.

[1] Cant. III, 4.

CHAPTER III

JESUS CHRIST ANNOUNCED BY THE PROPHETS AS TRUE KING OF OUR HEARTS

It was written in the eternal decrees that Jesus Christ should come into the world invested with regal dignity. This we find recorded in the pages of the Old Testament. Let us open Isaias, where the Prophet invites us to behold Sion, that is to say, the Church of the New Testament, the mansion of plenty: *"Look upon Sion, the city of our solemnity . . . a rich habitation."* [1] Now, who shall be the judge of this renowned city? Who its law-giver? Who shall be its king, if not Jesus Christ Himself? *"For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king: he will save us."* [2] Therefore, Our Saviour, that is, Jesus Christ, will be Himself the Judge, the Saviour, the King and Lord of the Church of the New Covenant.

[1] Is. XXXIII, 20. [2] Ibid, 22.

From Isaias let us pass on to the Royal Psalmist, who says expressly that Jesus Christ *"shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."* [1] But in order that we may not be mistaken as to the nature of this future King of the world, in order that we may not falsely imagine, as did the material-minded Jews, a conqueror clad in armor among his soldiers, in a rich chariot drawn by slaves, instead of a gentle and lovable king; the prophet Zacharias depicts Him surrounded by the attributes of poverty and humility, and as not disdaining to make His entry into proud Jerusalem seated on the humblest of steeds: *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King will come to thee, the just and saviour: he is poor and riding upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."* [2]

Let us take good heed of what the prophecies tell us about the future Redeemer, so that we may realize His figure in all its sweet and tender majesty. For the Jews are not the only ones who go astray concerning the royal dignity of the Messias. There are not a few

[1] Ps. LXXI, 8. [2] Zach. IX, 9.

Christians who would have Him to be as their gross and earthly minds conceive Him. If he is King, they say, let Him rule whether by love or by force, whether by sweetness or by terror; let Him bow down His enemies and, if need be, destroy them. If He does not do this, where is His regal dignity; where is His power?

The better to understand what, according to God's design, was to be the nature of the reign of Jesus Christ, it will be useful to appeal again to the testimony of Isaias, who among the prophets of old is the one who best draws the figure of the incarnate Word. Now what says this Seer of Consolation whose words are rather those of an evangelist or apostle than of a far-seeing prophet?

Isaias, son of Amos, speaking expressly of Jesus Christ Our Lord, says that He, coming into this world, will sit on the throne of David, and receive the kingdom of David as His portion, confirming it in judgment and justice thenceforth forevermore. *"He shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom: to establish it and strengthen it with judgment*

and with justice, from henceforth and for ever." [1]

But in order to show that this kingdom is to be spiritual, not temporal, the Prophet enumerates with great precision the especial titles of this King of love: *"And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."* [2]

Now, Jesus is truly the Wonderful, the Admirable, by excellence. Admirable in His mysterious conception; admirable in His birth from a Virgin as lowly as she is noble and exalted; admirable in His life of holiness and charity; admirable in His teaching and His miracles; admirable in His passion and death; admirable in His glorious resurrection. He is admirable not only in Himself, but in His saints, in whom He works, through His counsel, His inspiration and His grace, great and wonderful deeds. He is called the true God, because the Son of the Father and consubstantial with Him: for this reason all the angels owe Him adoration even when they see Him humbled and despised.

[1] Is. IX, 7. [2] Is. IX, 6.

But the Admirable One, this Man-God, although gentle and meek as a lamb, is nevertheless to be a great hero. He does not display His strength by slaying His foes or gaining great earthly victories, but by undergoing labors, contradictions and torments and even the death of the cross. He is strong to destroy the kingdom of His most powerful enemy, the devil, by means apparently humble and weak. He is the Father of a race of men who are to be new creatures in Him, begotten of the word of truth.[1] His especial mission is the bringing of peace into the world, that *"peace of God which surpasseth all understanding"* [2], which peace is to reign in the hearts of all His true children.

We may well picture, in the compendious description of the future Messias given by the Prophet Isaias, the amiable figure of our most sweet Lord Jesus Christ as we see it represented in the picture of the Sacred Heart, such as Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque caused to be spread all over the world, according to the revelation vouchsafed to her. Well may we, when gazing on this picture, reflect on these

[1] James I, 18. [2] Phil. IV, 7.

glorious attributes given by the Prophet Isaias to our blessed Saviour. This reflection will help us to understand how those glorious prophecies came to be fulfilled, and how Jesus Christ, entering this world, made His entry as King—King of our hearts.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS CHRIST BORN TRUE KING OF MANKIND

It is not given to every one who wishes, to be a king. Regal dignity is bestowed either by the votes of electors or by right of birth. The Saviour of the world was king both by the choice of His eternal Father and by reason of His marvelous birth.

From all eternity God had ordained that His only-begotten Son should be made man by virtue of that strict union known as hypostatic, by which the human nature of Jesus Christ, in the moment of its formation in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was united with the eternal Word in the oneness of person; that is, in the person of our Redeemer, God and Man together.

Along with this, God also decreed that perfect dominion over all creation should belong as of right to this Sacred Humanity of Our Redeemer and that the God-Man, Jesus Christ, should have a true, distinct and para-

mount authority over all mankind. It is for this reason that our divine Saviour, the Lamb of God, who is to wage war until the end of the world against Antichrist and all his satellites and conquer them, is called by St. John *"Lord of lords and King of kings."* [1]

So much, indeed, was due to this most sacred Humanity which was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the virginal womb of Mary and was to share—as far as any created being can share—the supreme dominion which God wields over all the works of his hand. Let us give ear to the inspired words which the royal Prophet puts in the mouth of the future Messias: *"I am appointed King by him over Sion, his holy mountain, preaching his commandment. The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession."* [2] This, then, is the reason of the regal dignity of Jesus Christ. Because He was the true Son of God, He received from His Father dominion over all mankind, who are bound to

[1] Apoc. XVII, 14. [2] Is. II, 6-8.

offer Him respect, obedience and tribute. This was as a befitting dowry of His Humanity in its mystical wedding with the Divinity.

But it was not enough for the eternal Father to have predestined Jesus Christ from all eternity to be the supreme King of the whole human race. He, whose very operation is marked with the stamp of infinite wisdom, wished moreover, to impress upon the temporal birth of His Son such a seal of honor and dignity, that this newly-born Babe might appear to the eyes of Heaven and earth as true King and Lord of humanity.

First of all, when the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin in order to announce to her, on the part of God, that the mystery of the Incarnation was soon to be accomplished in her virginal womb, he thus portrayed to her mind the prerogatives of this her future Son[1]: *"He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his Kingdom there shall be no end."*

[1] Luke I, 32, 33.

This is as much as to say that the son who was to be born of the Virgin Mary was to be the King Israel had so long wished for and expected; he was to be the son of David according to the flesh and was to inherit the royal throne from him. But that temporal throne existed no longer: the scepter of Juda had passed into strangers' hands and was not to come back to the Hebrew people. How, then, shall the future Messias reign over the house of Jacob? The only answer is this: He will reign in a fashion not temporal, but spiritual, not over the material descendants of Jacob only, but over his spiritual progeny, over the whole Church composed of Hebrews and Gentiles united in the oneness of faith, and He will reign over them forever.

But, behold, this idea of the spiritual Kingdom of Christ over mankind is more and more clearly brought out in the inspired books of the New Testament.

If we read the genealogy of Our Lord placed by St. Matthew at the beginning of his Gospel, we shall find that the first person mentioned in the list of kings who are given as ancestors of Jesus Christ is David, who is

expressly called King: *"Jesse begot David the King."* [1] Now, this evidently signifies that the future Messias, called expressly Son of David and so acclaimed by the multitude, was to inherit the scepter of regal dignity which the celebrated prophecy of Isaias assigns to him: *"He shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom."* [2]

At the same time, we should observe that to David only, in the whole list of kings, is this kingly title given; because David, more than all the others, prefigured the power, the meekness and the singular goodness of the future King of our hearts. And, therefore, God willed that Jesus should be born of a Virgin of the branch of the royal house of David, to make us understand that He had destined Him to be the loving King and Sovereign of all the redeemed.

Now, we ask, could the Father have declared in a more eloquent and persuasive fashion that it was His will that Jesus Christ as Man should divide with Him the empire of the world? What king, what emperor, can boast of so noble an origin as that of Our Saviour?

[1] Matth. I, 6. [2] Is. IX, 7.

What cradle, however bedecked with rich quilts and adorned with fine gold, is worthy to be put alongside the manger in which Mary laid her newly-born Son? What coat-of-arms, however richly blazoned and however famous in history, can be compared with that of the Son of Mary, which bears nothing but the three letters: I. H. S., *Iesus Hominum Salvator*—"Jesus, Saviour of mankind?" What crown, though bedizened with diamonds of the first water, can be set beside that which His Father placed on the head of the divine Child: *"Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor and hast set him over the works of thy hands."* [1]

Hence, although Jesus Christ appeared from His birth modest and humble, He was from His entry into the world presented to men by His Father as King and Lord of the universe, as the Prophet has expressly put it: *"I will make him my first-born, high above the kings of the earth . . . , and his throne as the sun before me, and as the moon perfect for ever."* [2]

However, God wished to hide His Son's

[1] Ps. VIII, 6-7. [2] Ps. LXXXVIII, 28, 38.

majesty and glory from our eyes and cover it with the cloak of meekness and tenderness. He wished to make it understood that Jesus Christ was not to rule by force or lord it over us through riches, but to govern and conquer men by love. Just as He was announced by the prophets as the Saviour of the world, and David rejoiced in his distant vision, pouring forth hymns to his meek sovereignty, so the Father has willed that we should with one voice recognize and proclaim as King of our hearts, our sweet Sovereign, our beloved Emperor, Jesus, whose scepter is no sign of tyranny and oppression but of charity and salvation. *"The Lord is our King: he will save us."* [1]

But what name shall be given Him if not one designed to signify this prerogative of King of our hearts? His name pronounced for the first time in the divine decrees, revealed in time by Angels, bestowed on Him by Mary and Joseph and sealed by His own blood, is the sweet name of Jesus which means "Saviour." This ineffable name which expresses in itself the end for which He was made Man

[1] Is. XXXIII, 22.

and all He has done and suffered for us, reminds us also that He is our loving King and the sweet Sovereign of our hearts.

Let us beseech our dear King, Jesus, to fill our hearts with the sweet balm of His most holy name. May the sweetness of its odor be diffused through all our powers and may it inform all our actions. May it be the aspiration of our souls and the pledge of our eternal salvation.

Let us also beseech Our Lady that, as she was the first to pronounce this lovable name of life and salvation—and never did she pronounce it save in accents of most vivid faith and ardent love—we, too, may utter it with deep reverence and heartfelt love; so that it may become in our mouths as it should be in our hearts, a balm of sweetest odor: *"Thy name is as oil poured out."* [1]

[1] Cant. I, 2.

CHAPTER V

JESUS CHRIST ADORED BY THE MAGI AS KING OF THE JEWS

WHILE the angels of Paradise were singing hymns of praise over the stable of Bethlehem where lay the newly-born Babe, Saviour of Israel, behold there appeared suddenly in the eastern heavens a new and brilliant star before the gaze of some wise men of upright intention. This they knew by divine revelation to be that mysterious star announced by Balaam as the sign of the birth of the coming Messias: *"A star shall rise out of Jacob."* [1] And so, following the impulse of the Holy Spirit and paying no heed to weariness or peril, these holy men took to the road under the guidance of the star, in search of the new-born Saviour. In the event which follows, we have the first external and solemn manifestation of the royal dignity of the promised Messias.

[1] Num. XXIV, 17.

In fact, no sooner had the pious pilgrims arrived at Jerusalem than they sought an audience with Herod, and asked him the astounding question: *"Where is he that is born King of the Jews."*[1] Astounding indeed, under the circumstances was the proposed question. Who had taught the Magi to call the Messias: *"King of the Jews?"* Who had revealed to them that the Infant which they sought would be invested with the dignity of king and would moreover really exercise this power? There is no doubt that they were taught by none save the Holy Spirit, who had willed that in Him who lay in the crib at Bethlehem, the nations should recognize their King, Jesus Christ, the loving King of our hearts.

At the voice of the Magi, Jerusalem arose from her lethargy, and Herod, answering their questions, pointed out to them the place where, according to the prophets, the Messias was to be born; asking them moreover, when they had found the new-born King, to bring him back word that he, too, might come and adore Him.

Thereupon the pilgrims wend their way to-

[1] Matth. II, 2.

ward Bethlehem; and behold, the star which had vanished on their entry into Jerusalem reappears as brilliant as before. With hearts full of holy joy at the sight, they follow their heavenly guide until at last they see it stopping over a poor cavern.

But can it be that this is a king's dwelling? And where is the palace, where the marble columns, where the regal staircases, where the ranks of servants and pages, where the sumptuous bedizenments of the new-born child, where the golden cradle in which He should slumber?

Not a trace of these is to be seen. On the contrary, as the Magi enter the cave, they behold two poor persons, Mary and Joseph, and in the arms of Mary a wailing infant. At this sight, however, the Wise Men of the East are not shaken in their faith. They do not turn and depart. Far from it. Enlightened by grace, behold them prostrate at the feet of the divine Infant: and with all the enthusiasm of their believing souls they adore Him as King of the earth and proclaim Him Sovereign of their hearts.

Not content with this, they add outward

homage to their inward affection, they open up their rich treasures and offer to the divine Babe gold, incense and myrrh.—Gold for their perfect love; incense for their devotion; myrrh to prefigure their compassion for the future sufferings of this beloved King.

These Wise Men quite understood that Jesus was no earthly king, but a heavenly one, the King of all hearts. Having opened and entirely submitted their hearts to Him, they grasped the meaning of the naked poverty that surrounded Jesus, of the manger in which He was laid, of the swaddling-bands in which He was wrapped, of all that seemed derogatory to an earthly king but which well befitted the coming of the sweet and tender King of our hearts.

But Herod was not able to understand this, for he had no ideal beyond domination and tyranny, and so he was unworthy to be allowed in the presence of the divine Child or to taste the sweetness of His countenance in which the angels rejoice.

"If the Magi had sought an earthly king," says St. John Chrysostom,[1] "and had found

[1] Homil. II in op. imperf.

him in such a lowly condition, they would have been confused to have undergone in vain the fatigues of so perilous a journey. But since they were in search of a heavenly King, even though they perceived in Him no sign of regal excellence, still convinced as they were by the testimony of the star, they adored Him. In fact, they saw only a man, but acknowledged God and offered Him gifts becoming His exalted dignity as the true Christ: gold, indeed they offered as to a mighty King; frankincense, which is used in divine sacrifices, they burned before Him as before God; myrrh, which is used to embalm the bodies of the dead, they offered to Him who was to die for the salvation of all."

On the other hand, Herod and the carnal Jews, who dreamt of nothing but terrestrial greatness and worldly honors, were unable to comprehend these sublime mysteries. Consequently, they were not worthy to be admitted into the presence of the meek King of our hearts, nor could they enjoy the sweetness of that countenance on which the angels delight to gaze. As St. Augustine says, "they were like those who built Noah's ark, who furnished

others a means of escape, but they themselves perished in the deluge; or again, they were like milestones which point out the road, but they themselves do not move." [1]

The Magi, on the other hand, were made blessed by the presence of this humble King, and when they had returned to their own country, they warmly and convincingly preached the reign of this lovable Sovereign of all hearts.

Whether the Magi were absolute monarchs or only powerful lords, such as are called kings by orientals, cannot be ascertained and is not of any great moment to us. But this we know, that they were astronomers and were considered as learned men in their own country; that they were both great and wise, and, moreover, that they were rich and powerful, as is shown by their gifts. Now what is meant by all this display of greatness, wisdom and riches in the midst of the humility, poverty and discomfort of the cave of Bethlehem? What, if not the fulfillment of the will of the eternal Father, that *"All kings of the earth shall adore him: all nations shall serve him,"* [2] that *"all the na-*

[1] Serm. LXVI de Diversis, c. 4. [2] Ps. LXXI, 11.

tions thou has made shall come and adore before thee, O Lord: and they shall glorify thy name." [1]

So the holy Magi went back to their country, the country whence the sun rises, and announced to the people sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, that in the humble cave of Bethlehem they had found the most lovable king that the world has ever known—most rich, because His poverty is for us an endless source of unspeakable riches; most powerful, because one look of His is enough to bend beneath His scepter every heart, however rebellious; most lovable, because submission to His empire and service is the fount of great sweetness which no human consolation can ever equal.

[1] Ps. LXXXV, 9.

CHAPTER VI

JESUS CHRIST PROCLAIMED KING BY HIS DISCIPLES AND THE MULTITUDE

THE workings of Divine Providence are always full of wisdom, but when dealing with the sacred Humanity of Our Lord they are indeed marvelous. The eternal Father had constituted Jesus King and Sovereign over the whole human race and had decreed that at His entrance into the world, this sovereignty should be solemnly proclaimed by the Wise Men coming from the East.

For thirty years this divine King of our hearts lived a hidden life all absorbed in prayer and sacrifice. At last the moment came in which He was to illumine the world with the splendor of His doctrine and renew it with the fire of His charity. Already, by the waters of the Jordan, a heavenly voice had proclaimed Him the beloved Son of His Father, while at the same time the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, had descended upon Him. Already

the forerunner had hailed Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.[1] But there still lacked a voice to recognize and solemnly proclaim Him King of Israel.

This voice came from one of the first disciples of Jesus, destined to become an illustrious member of the Apostolic College. Nathaniel or Bartholomew, a man, it would seem, learned in the Law, led by Philip, heard the sweet and persuasive voice of Jesus saying to Him: *"When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."*[2] These words were enough to open up Nathaniel's heart to the truth of Jesus' divinity. He acknowledged Him to be the promised Messias and in an ardent faith and burning love proclaimed Him without hesitation Son of God, the King of Israel: *"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel."*[3]

From this time forth these words resounded in the ears of the followers of Jesus: *"Thou art the King of Israel."* And while His faithful disciples heard His preaching with all docility, while they followed Him as a spiritual leader, while they trusted to Him as to a

[1] John I, 29. [2] John I, 48. [3] John I, 49.

father full of provident and tender solicitude, they realized that they were dealing with a King as great as He was good and merciful, with the King of Israel, with the most lovable King of our hearts.

But Divine Providence was not content with raising, at the beginning of the public life of Jesus Christ, an authoritative voice to proclaim Him King of Israel. The Father wished furthermore to crown His beloved Son's three years of preaching and apostolic deeds by decreeing the solemn recognition of His sovereignty and royal dignity on the part of the multitude who had heard from His lips the words of truth and salvation.

The Pasch was approaching and Jesus was walking toward Jerusalem, where in a few days He was to be put to death. Now Divine Providence had disposed that this time He should make His entry in an entirely new fashion, in a fashion worthy of a sovereign, but of a meek and gentle sovereign.

Riding not on a proudly caparisoned charger, but on a humble ass, and followed by His disciples and an immense multitude, Jesus triumphantly enters the Holy City, acclaimed

by the joyful shouts of the populace: *"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."* [1]

Now, what does this sudden applause and unwonted acclamation mean? Whence so strange an inspiration in a people who yesterday were reluctant to lend credence to His wonderful teaching? How is it that without any previous plan they come forth from their houses and, seized with enthusiasm, pluck boughs of olive, take off their garments and strew them on the road by which Jesus is to pass? What does this signify, if not that the irresistible force of this King of love can in an instant so move the most rebellious hearts as to subject them to His sweet sovereignty?

Indeed, it is no small wonder, in the first place, that the will of the asses' owner should have been so speedily overruled as to show no reluctance to the disciples of Jesus when they wished to take away his beasts. But who would have so touched the man's heart save this same Jesus who, as supreme King of all nature, moved at His pleasure with irresistible

[1] Matth. XXI, 9.

strength and sweetness the minds and the hearts of men? He it is, also, who inclined the multitude to come and meet Him and to show such respect and veneration as to cover with garments and branches the road by which He was to pass. As a meek Lord, disguised in lowliness and poverty, He secretly moved their hearts and drew them interiorly to Himself, thus giving them to understand what is the nature of the empire by which He will one day draw to Himself all the peoples of the earth: *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself."* [1]

Jesus could well have done at the beginning of His public life what He did only at the end of it. But He wished to defer this triumphal entry to the last days of His mortal course for the sake of that characteristic of His which is humility of heart. Indeed, He wished to keep during the years of His public life the simplicity and attractiveness with which the glitter of regal dignity would, in the eyes of the poor and lowly, have been incompatible. He also wished to teach us that this life is a time

[1] John XII, 32.

of humiliation and suffering and it is only at the end of our course that we are to expect crowns and laurels.

But what most clearly sets off, in this glorious happening, the true character of the regal dignity of our divine Lord is the voice of exultation with which the people bore witness to their feelings of veneration for Him. *"Hosanna,"* they cried (that is, "salvation and glory"), *"to the Son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."* [1] *"Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh: Hosanna in the highest."* [2] *"Blessed be the King who cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven and glory on high."* [3]

Such, according to the evangelists, were the cries and songs of joy with which those that went before and those that followed after, made the air ring in praise of Jesus Christ. Those simple people, guided by the Holy Ghost, understood that Jesus was truly the promised Son of David, who should reign over Israel and whose throne and kingdom should be established for all eternity. But they un-

[1] Matth. XXI, 9. [2] Mark XI, 10. [3] Luke XIX, 38.

derstood also that His power should be displayed by love: love which should pierce the depths of hearts; love which should overcome every obstacle; love which should triumph over all resistance.

God willed that all the peoples of the earth should recognize Jesus as their King; but not for that, a commonplace king, who should reign to-day and to-morrow be made equal, in the sepulcher, with the least of his subjects. Jesus is a peaceful King, a meek King, the King of our hearts, He of whom Isaias speaks: *"Behold thy King cometh to thee meek."*[1] This, His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, was ordained by God to make known to the world the King it had so anxiously awaited; and to make manifest to all His subjects the attributes and characteristics of His reign, which is a reign of peace, a reign of love.

"How did it serve Our Lord to be King of Israel?" asks St. Augustine.[2] *"Was it so great a matter for the King of Ages to become a King of men? For Christ did not become King of Israel to exact tribute or to arm troops for the overthrow of visible enemies.*

[1] Matth. XXI, 5.

[2] Tract. L in Joan.

He became King of Israel that He might govern souls, that He might make eternal provision for them, that He might lead such as believe in Him, hope in Him and love Him, to His heavenly Kingdom."

CHAPTER VII

JESUS CHRIST BEARS SOLEMN WITNESS TO THE TRUTH OF HIS ROYAL DIGNITY UNTO MARTYRDOM

JESUS CHRIST was appointed by His Father, King and Sovereign over the whole human race. This is a fundamental truth of Catholic dogma, and it may be maintained that the firm and unwavering assertion of this truth, on the part of Jesus, was the determining motive which caused Him to be condemned to death; so that, in fact, He died a martyr to the truth of His own regal dignity.

Our divine Lord indeed gave up His life to save mankind; but if we consider the stages of those unjust proceedings which ended in His execution on the cross, we shall see that the final pretext brought forward by the Jews for demanding from Pilate the imposition of so enormous a punishment as the death-sentence is that He asserted Himself to be Christ the King, and that, far from denying

the fact when charged with it, He confirmed it solemnly.

Human plans and divine counsel, springing from different principles, met in the fact of Our Lord's death. Without doubt the end for which God had decreed that Our Lord should die for us, was that He might bring about, by His passion and death, our ransom from the servitude of sin, and so procure our eternal salvation. But, on the part of His enemies, a pretext was needed for their misdeed and cruelty; and this pretext was found in Jesus having called Himself King of the Jews. Now, this claim Our Lord sustained to the end, so that He is indeed the Martyr to this truth of His royal dignity.

What, in fact, were the charges brought by the Jews against Jesus before Pilate, in order that they might obtain from him that the Nazarene should be put to death? Some of these charges were moved in the house of Caiphas, others in the pretorium of Pilate. Let us see what these charges were.

In the house of the High Priest, Caiphas, both in the first judgment, which took place in the night between Thursday and Friday,

and in the second, which was held on Friday before the full Council of the Sanhedrin, the Jews, in order to justify their impious design of condemning Jesus Christ to death, put forward the pretext that He had made Himself out to be the promised Messias, the Son of the true God.[1] As this assertion of Christ's was a tacit condemnation of the evil trend of their whole lives, they had conceived in their hearts a mortal hatred of Him. And in very deed, this assertion of Our Lord bred in their perverse minds the true motive for which they determined to have Him condemned to death.

But as the Jews well knew that such an assertion would not, with a pagan ruler like Pilate, constitute a sufficient pretext for putting Jesus to death, it being a common thing for pagans to give a man divine honors, they saw themselves obliged to find another motive which should sway the mind of the Governor and induce him to condemn Jesus to death. And what was this motive, by which the Jews finally brought about their evil and cruel design?

This motive was that Jesus had made Him-

[1] Matth. XXVI, 63-66; Luke XXII, 70-71.

self King and had, in so doing, plotted against the Roman Cæsar of whom Pilate was the representative and whose imperial power it was his duty to defend.[1]

It is true that when the Jews saw the Governor wavering, because he did not think this charge really serious, they added, to intimidate him, that according to their Law Jesus must die, because He made Himself the Son of God.[2] But they did not press this point; for the last and formal motive which they brought forward was Our Lord's claim to be King, bringing before Pilate's mind the wrath of Cæsar which would in all likelihood fall on himself if he did not punish with death so ambitious a man. It is, in fact, this accusation and threat, as it appears from Holy Writ, that finally swayed the mind of Pilate and led him in the end to pass sentence of death on Jesus.[3]

But let us take up the Gospel narrative as the evangelists have it: *"We have found this man,"* said the Jews to Pilate, speaking of Our Lord, *"perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar and saying that*

[1] Luke XXII, 2. [2] John XIX, 7. [3] John XIX, 16.

he is Christ the King."[1] Now, what answer did Pilate make to this charge? As soon as he had heard the words, he began to doubt whether they were not mere calumny; from the obvious falsehood of the first two accusations, he was moved to reject them all. In the first place, the accusers had not brought forward any proofs; in the second, it was not possible to suppose that Jesus Christ had sought to arouse sedition and riot, or had tried to dissuade the populace from paying tribute to the agents of Cæsar, when no reports from the subordinates or heads of the military had reached the Governor's ears.

Pilate, therefore, in the trial he made Jesus undergo in his own official residence, was absolutely silent on the first two accusations, and examined Our Lord only on His title of King of the Jews which, according to rumor, the accused had claimed. He wished, therefore, to know in what sense Jesus had called Himself by the name He was charged with having usurped, being anxious to safeguard the privilege of the Roman Cæsar whom he represented in Judea and whose dignity it was his

[1] Luke XXIII, 2.

business to see did not suffer any diminution. So, when Christ stood before him, the only thing he asked Him was: *"Art Thou the King of the Jews?"* [1]

Jesus knew well that on His reply to this very explicit question depended His sentence of life or death. But what did He answer? Having given beforehand a clear and curt account of the entirely spiritual nature of His kingdom, which account exactly expressed the characteristic of His regal dignity, at another and still more urgent demand of Pilate: *"Art thou a king then?"* Jesus replied curtly: *"Thou sayest that I am a King."* [2] As if to say: Thou hast said exactly what I am. The case is precisely as thou hast stated it. For thou hast said what was foretold of Me by the prophets; thou hast said what was decreed of Me throughout all eternity by My eternal Father.

Our tender Saviour Jesus Christ was born and came into this world for this end, of bearing solemn witness to the truth. And the truth was this: that He, born of the Virgin Mary, was the true Messias, sent by God to

[1] Matth. XXVII, 11. [2] John XVIII, 37.

save the world: and as such He was King and Sovereign of all mankind.

Thus, the Apostle St. Paul, wishing to exhort his disciple Timothy to suffer all the evils of this life and even death itself for the truth of revealed faith, could not find a stronger motive to inflame his courage than the example of Jesus who, fearless of death, gave under Pontius Pilate solemn and public testimony to the truth of His mission and to His regal dignity and sovereignty: *"I charge thee before God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate, a good confession."* [1]

The example of Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, dying for the truth of His teaching, should keep up the faith and courage of Christians in the struggles of this mortal life. Now, the truth that Jesus proclaimed at the risk of His life before the Roman governor, was that of His sovereignty and royal dignity. But with this He meant to be held as a spiritual King, the loving King of our hearts, for He markedly protested that His kingdom was not of this world.[2]

[1] I Tim. VI, 13. [2] John XVIII, 36.

It belongs to us, the loyal subjects of Jesus Christ, to recognize His sovereignty over all the world and especially over men's hearts, by submitting ourselves with perfect docility to His teaching and letting ourselves be guided by His holy inspirations. Let us offer all we are to Him, praying Him as our Sovereign that He would illuminate our minds and confirm our wills in the right way, and direct the motions of our hearts, so that there may be nothing in us uninspired by His holy love, or undirected to His greater glory.

CHAPTER VIII

JESUS CHRIST PROCLAIMED KING OF THE JEWS BY PILATE

We have said that Jesus Christ surrendered Himself to death to bear witness to the truth not only of His divinity but also of His regal power over all mankind. But as the Jews deemed that the question of His royal dignity would alone arouse interest in the mind of the Governor, they laid stress on this rather than on the question of His divinity. We must now follow attentively the course of the sorrowful passion of Our Lord in its last phase, in order to see how this attribute of royalty which Jesus vindicated for Himself finally constituted the determining motive of His opprobrious condemnation.

When Pilate, wishing to free the Saviour from the Jews' hands, offered the people their choice, Jesus or Barabbas, he used these words: *"But you have a custom that I should release one unto you at the Pasch. Will you, therefore, that I release unto you the King of the*

Jews?" [1] This means that Pilate well remembered that the Jews' accusation against Jesus consisted in His having called Himself Christ the King.[2] He had also understood from Our Saviour Himself that this kingdom of His would cast no shadow on that of Cæsar; for the Saviour had said explicitly that his kingdom was not of this world. Hence, it was not in derision, but quite seriously that Pilate called Jesus "King of the Jews." He thought, and with reason, that if Jesus were guilty, His guilt had nothing to do with State matters, but was an affair of religion, He having explained that His kingdom was not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom. *"The conviction that Jesus was King of the Jews, could not be uprooted from Pilate's heart,"* says St. Augustine: *"just as if that same truth, about whose nature he had made inquiry, had as unalterably written it there as later it wrote it on the title of the cross."*

Further, if we consider the insults inflicted on Jesus by the servants of Pilate after His scourging, the most striking is certainly the reproach made to Him of His having called

[1] John XVIII, 39. [2] Luke XXIII, 2.

Himself King of the Jews. This is, as it were, the sum of all the outrages heaped upon Him, and it throws into clear relief the nature of the process brought against Him and the reason of the popular excitement. In fact, the evangelist says: *"And they began to salute him: Hail, King of the Jews."*[1] See here under what guise Jesus is known even by the vile soldiery. See the character under which He is to suffer such cruel torments. See the attribute which will speedily determine His condemnation to a shameful death.

Following the course of the sacred narrative, we find that the popular fury, egged on by the hatred and malice of the chief priests, after having preferred Barabbas to Jesus, demanded His crucifixion with diabolic persistence. Pilate, then, having again and again attested the Saviour's innocence, made every possible effort to set Him free. The Jews understood this; and in their determination to prevent His being set at liberty, they once more had recourse to the accusation that Jesus had made Himself King.

Heedless of His declaration that His king-

[1] Mark XV, 18.

dom was not of this world, they took up anew the charge they had already brought against Him, of His pretensions to royal dignity, representing Him as guilty of outrage against Cæsar and of posing as his rival: *"If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."* [1] Pilate then sat in the tribunal in a place called *"Lithostrotos,"* in Hebrew *"Gabbatha,"* [2] and the evangelist moreover remarks that it was on the day of the Pasch, about the sixth hour. Then Pilate said to the Jews: *"Behold your King."* [3]

Here, then, is a pagan Governor, seated with all solemnity on his tribunal, who having heard from the very mouth of Jesus of Nazareth that He was King but that His kingdom was not of this world, publicly announced in the chief city of Judaism and proclaimed on the most solemn feast of the year, at full midday, to the high priest, the successor of Aaron, and to the whole priestly and levitical order, to the whole Sanhedrin and to an immense crowd from the two provinces of Judea and Galilee, to Gentiles from various nations also

[1] John XIX, 12. [2] John XIX, 13. [3] John XIX, 14.

there present—that Jesus was their King: *"Ecce Rex vester."* [1]

It is evident that, in proclaiming Jesus King of the Jews, Pilate did not use ambiguous phrases, nor did he utter these words in a tone of irony, as some might suppose. Neither did he so speak in the name of his master Tiberius or the Roman rulers of Judea. But what he said he said, as it were, in the name of the whole human race, with all solemnity, as if he had been then representing all the nations of the earth, as a heaven-sent ambassador proclaiming to all the world the royal dignity of Jesus: *"Ecce Rex vester."* We must indeed recognize here the hidden power of the Godhead which guided Pilate's tongue and made it serve the glorification of the incarnate Word.

Now, see how the rejecting of Jesus Christ as King implies the rejecting of all the advantages which spring from the Redemption. At the people's cry: *"Away with Him: Away with Him: Crucify Him,"* [2] behold Pilate insists again: *"Shall I crucify your King?"* [3] And the priests, with one voice, in the name

[1] John XIX, 14. [2] John XIX, 15. [3] *Ibid.*

of the whole Synagogue, protest that they have no other king but Cæsar, renouncing in the same breath the promises God had made to the patriarchs of old, to Abraham, Moses and David. In the end, they go so far as to utter a profession of apostasy. In fact, by saying: Jesus of Nazareth is not our King, they repudiate the hope of Israel; they disown the Saviour promised by God, while they reply with one voice: *"We have no king but Cæsar."* [1] For it was impossible that the promised Messias should not be a king; hence there was no other alternative save either to admit the Messias promised by God and recognize His regal dignity, or to reject Him as a king and, in so doing, renounce all the benefits of the Incarnation and the Redemption. The Jews took up the second attitude.

Unlike the Jews, let us recognize Jesus and venerate Him as both true King and true Messias, given by God to the world for the salvation of mankind. And let us beseech Him to allow us to share all the graces which He has brought with Him. May He rule, as the true Sovereign that He is, over all our affections, over all the impulses of our hearts.

[1] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER IX

SUPREME TESTIMONY GIVEN TO THE ROYAL DIGNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

We have seen how Jesus was proclaimed King by Pilate and how this title became the head and fount of the charge brought forward by the Jews to compass the condemnation of the Saviour. But a supreme testimony was yet to be given to the fact of the regal dignity of Jesus Christ. This was to come from a twofold source, from His enemies and from His friends; the former in the shape of a supreme insult; the latter in the shape of a supreme homage.

The enemies were drawn from all ranks of the Jewish people, the priests, the scribes, the ancients and all the multitude looking on. To these were joined the soldiery, which was Gentile but followed the example of the Jews, and all of them launched at the crucified Saviour the impious defiance: *"If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the*

cross: and we will believe him." [1] "*If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.*" [2]

Jesus at this defiance did not give way, did not forsake the cross, because the well-being and salvation of His blasphemers required that he should not leave this throne of divine clemency. The excess of His charity kept Him hanging wounded on the cross in the midst of tortures and contumely. At the same time, He bore eloquent witness to His regal dignity. For this supreme mockery shows that if Jesus hung on the tree of the cross, it was because He wished to be recognized as the King of Israel. Thus, in His martyrdom He gave solemn witness to His divinity and to His quality of King of mankind.

But lo! in this very place of torture and scorn, another voice dominates the tumult and confesses, in the presence of all, this royal dignity of Jesus. One of the two thieves crucified with Him, being near his end, and therefore in that state of mind when human interest no longer moves man to keep up the language of deceit and flattery, turns to Jesus

[1] Matth. XXVII, 42; Mark XV, 32. [2] Luke XXIII, 37.

and says to Him: *"Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into thy kingdom."* [1]

Into Thy kingdom? But how can he speak of a kingdom with reference to Jesus? Where is the throne of majesty, where is the scepter of power, where is the mantle of state, where is the regal crown? For nothing is here to be seen save an infamous gallows, blood-stained nails and a crown of thorns. But let us not forget it, we are dealing with the reign of a meek Sovereign of whom the Church sings: *"Regnavit a ligno Deus,"* "God hath reigned from the tree"—the meek and gentle King Jesus, the King of our hearts.

This humble and ardent prayer of the good thief is indeed a precious confession of the regal dignity of Jesus Christ. The cross, with all its accompanying shame, is not for that repentant sinner, that hero of faith and love, an object of shame or scandal, but a memorial of the power and wisdom of God. If others, and especially his companion in misery, only behold in Jesus an iniquitous malefactor, justly, as they think, condemned by the severity of the laws; he, for his part, sees in

[1] Luke XXIII, 42.

that hard wood, the throne of the royal majesty of the Saviour, and in that head crowned with thorns he adores the King of kings and Lord of lords. Not content with turning to Him in his heart, he wishes that his voice be heard by everybody, so that all may know that Jesus is the true King, the Messias promised by the prophets.

Jesus, on His part, confirms with the most consoling promises the ardent confession of this man, once a rebel to the law of God but now changed into His own humble subject: *"This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise."* [1]

Jesus, therefore, is King of our hearts, and all those are His subjects who submit to Him fully and try to model after His image their wills, their affections and their whole hearts.

The Christian soul, which sees in the Sacred Heart of Jesus its rightful Leader, its Chief and Sovereign, and places itself entirely under His scepter, consecrating to Him all that it is and all that it possesses, may be said to act in accordance with the spirit of the evangelical text as embodied in the narrative of the good thief. Such a soul, by the fact that it follows

[1] Luke XXIII, 43.

in all things and through all things the lovable will of Jesus and obeys His commands, is already, as it were, in possession of the heavenly kingdom: for to serve Jesus is to reign.

CHAPTER X

THE TITLE POSTED UP ON THE CROSS, A PROOF OF THE REGAL DIGNITY OF JESUS CHRIST

MARVELOUS, indeed, is the order of Divine Providence, which often attains its ends by means apparently the least adapted. It is not uncommon for God to make use of a man's action to attain an end precisely opposed to the intention of the doer. Now, this was just what took place with regard to the manifestation of Our Lord's regal dignity. God wished that this truth should be proclaimed to the whole world and asserted in an incisive and forcible manner, even through the agency of the man who had condemned Jesus to death, through the agency of Pilate.

Some authors hold that it was a common custom among the Romans to affix the motive of the condemnation to the gibbet on which the culprit was to be executed. However this may be, it is beyond doubt that Pilate chose to make obvious to the world that the true and

only motive for which he had condemned Jesus Christ to death, was the title of King of the Jews which the Saviour had assumed. As a matter of fact, Pilate did not give to the Jews in writing the motive of the condemnation of Jesus to the death of the cross, before he had said to them: *"Would you have me crucify your King?"* and received an affirmative answer from them. Thus, he gave them to understand that if he had passed this sentence, it was through no wish of his own, for he knew that the regal dignity which Jesus attributed to Himself, carried with it no prejudice to the authority of the Roman Cæsar.

It is really wonderful to observe how all the four evangelists unanimously make mention of this title; and although they do not all do so in the same way, yet in none of them are lacking the two essential words of the cause: "King of the Jews"—*"Rex Judæorum."* St. Mark limits his reference to these two words alone; St. Matthew prefaces them with: "This is Jesus"—*"Hic est Jesus,"* and St. Luke: *"Hic est."* St. John finally sets down the record thus: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the

Jews"—*"Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum."*

Very beautiful are St. Jerome's words upon this subject: *"I never cease marveling that the Jews found no other pretext for slaying Jesus, save that He called Himself King of the Jews."* [1] And St. Augustine writes to the same purpose: *"The Magi came from the rising sun, that is from the East; Pilate from the setting sun, that is from the West. The first bore witness to the rising birth of the King of the Jews; the second to His setting or death."* [2]

And it is yet more marvelous to see the subsequent bearing of Pilate. He had previously complied with the will of the Jews, even to the point of sacrificing his own conscience and his own reputation to the envy and tyranny of others, in condemning One whom he knew to be innocent. Now, when the same Jews reproached Him for having written, *"Jesus King of the Jews,"* and therefore insistently urged him to change the title to this other: *"He said I am King of the Jews,"* he curtly refused to satisfy their will, and with a firmness unlooked for in so feeble a character,

[1] Exposition on St. Matthew, c. XXVII, 37.
[2] Serm. cc. I. 2.

answered categorically: *"What I have written, I have written."* [1] How just is St. Augustine's comment: *"For the same reason Pilate wrote what he wrote, for which the Lord said what He said."* [2]

Great, indeed, is the excellence and glory of this title: *"Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum"* and overpowering is the meaning contained in it, though he who wrote it did not fully understand it. The Hebrew people was celebrated throughout the world for the marvels that had happened in Egypt on its behalf, for the riches and sumptuousness of its Temple at Jerusalem and for its acknowledgment of one only God, the Creator of the universe. It was known also that the Jews were looking forward to the coming of a royal Messias. Now, then, behold this King, solemnly proclaimed throughout the world; behold this King awaited equally by Israelites and Gentiles. He who has died on Golgotha is indeed that King of the Jews from whom the salvation of all mankind takes its rise.

Jesus, that is to say, the Saviour of the world, conceived and brought up at Nazareth

[1] John XIX, 22. [2] Tract. CXVII in Jo.

and hence called the Nazarene, raised up above the earth, bears written over His head the charter of human reconciliation; and in order that it may be understood by all that salvation is brought by Him equally to Hebrews, Latins and Greeks, the evangelist does not omit to notice that the title was written in the three then most universal languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

God had thus disposed all things for the greater glory of his only-begotten Son so that all might understand the meaning and purport of His death on the cross. Hebrew was the language of the country in which this great mystery was being accomplished. Latin and Greek, although not the sole languages spoken by the Gentiles, were however the most celebrated and the best known. Greek was the language used by the first philosophers of the world, and Latin was the proper idiom of that vast Roman Empire which ruled over all the known lands and seas. Thus the eternal Father had disposed all things to the end that the royal dignity of His beloved Son Jesus Christ should be proclaimed even to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Here, however, we must be careful not to infer that, because Jesus Christ was proclaimed King of the Jews, He was not King of the whole world. For the real Hebrews are the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the children of the promise, the adopted children of God. Now, the people of God, the chosen people, represented the whole body of the faithful, who, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ should form one great family, the Christian family, the Holy Church of God. Hence, Jesus Christ is King of the Jews, but of the Jews who are such not according to the letter, but in spirit and through the holiness of their hearts; of the Jews who receive their praise not from man but from God. *"In this title, King of the Jews,"* says St. Augustine, *"whom must we understand if not the children of Abraham, the sons of promise who are indeed the sons of God? Christ is therefore King of the Jews, but of the Jews by circumcision of the heart, in spirit, not according to the letter, whose praise does not come from men but from God."* [1]

Now, we also wish to be children of Abra-

[1] Tract. CXVII in Jo. 5.

ham, children of promise, children of God; therefore, we rightly proclaim Jesus the tender Sovereign of our hearts. Come, O Jesus, reign in my heart, in my spirit, in all my affections. Into Thy hands do I put the reins of my soul. Guide it whither Thou pleasest; curb it by all Thy desires; speak to me, Thy devoted servant, and I will hear with docility and follow faithfully Thy commandments and Thy inspirations. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth"—*"Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus."* [1]

[1] I Kings III, 10.

CHAPTER XI

THE KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST, NOT OF THIS WORLD

JESUS CHRIST is true King and Sovereign of mankind. As such He was announced by the prophets; as such His Father made Him known to the Magi; as such He was venerated by the multitude; such, too, He openly declared Himself to be, and on this account was made the object of accusations and persecutions which led Him to the infamous death of the cross. Together with this, the Roman Governor formally proclaimed Him King of the Jews, leaving to the whole world, in the writing set over the cross, the everlasting record of this truth as a witness to the fact that Jesus Christ died a martyr to the assertion of His own regal dignity. Thus were the Scriptures marvelously fulfilled, which announced the coming of the Messias as Prince of Peace and Father of the world to come." [1]

[1] Is. IX, 6.

But here a doubt arises. If Jesus Christ is King, how was it that, when the people wanted to make Him king, He declined the honor? In fact, we read that after the multitude whom He fed in the desert had proclaimed Him to be the great Prophet who was to come into the world, and came forward seeking to make Him king, He fled from their hands and retired into the mountains to pray.[1] This doubt will give us occasion to ponder again over the words spoken by Jesus about the real nature of His kingdom, and so to enter more deeply into the mystery of His royal dignity.

When Pilate asked Jesus, *"Art thou the King of the Jews?"* the Saviour replied, so that there could be no doubt of the matter, that He was King indeed,[2] first stating, however, that this kingdom of His (which had been described and promised by the prophets) was not, as the Jews believed, a temporal, earthly and transient kingdom, and had no likeness to the kingdoms of the earth. *"My kingdom,"* said Jesus, *"is not of this world."* [3]

[1] John IV, 15. Cf. Matth. XIV, 23. [2] John XVIII, 33-37. [3] John XVIII, 36.

And of this He gave a conclusive proof. If My kingdom were of this world, I would have certainly made numerous followers and powerful friends for Myself, who would take My defense and protect Me from My enemies. But, far from this, I have no close friends save poor fishermen without arms and without authority. *"If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but My kingdom is not from hence."* [1]

Here, St. Augustine truly observes that Jesus did not say: My kingdom is not *in* this world, but *of* this world; likewise He did not say: My kingdom is not *here,* but is not *hence, "non est hinc."* Jesus Christ reigns over the whole universe, but He does not reign by earthly appointment after the fashion of temporal kings, because His kingdom was given Him by His Father and is as high above all other kingdoms, as heaven is above the earth.

So, then, the Jews had need to be disabused of the false notion they had conceived concerning the kingdom of the Messias. They imagined a king surrounded by all the military

[1] John XVIII, 36.

apparatus proper to a king of this world; in short, they fancied a king who, by force of arms, would subdue the whole world and depose every other sovereign. Jesus Christ, our King, on the contrary, is the most meek and pacific Sovereign that can be.

Earthly kings, then, have nothing to fear from Jesus. The meek Saviour does not seek to take away their authority or to compete with them. Rather, His will is that their orders should be respected, their voice obeyed and their persons duly reverenced. *"Listen, ye, O Jews, and ye, O Gentiles,"* exclaims St. Augustine; *"pay heed, all ye kingdoms of the earth. I do not hinder you from reigning in this world, because My kingdom is not of this world. Do not let yourselves be carried away by vain fear, as was Herod when he was vainly frightened by the announcement of the birth of Christ and when he put to death so many innocent children in order to kill Jesus. My kingdom is not of this world: what reason is there to be afraid? Come rather to this same kingdom which is not of this world. Come through faith."* [1]

[1] Tract CXV in Jo. N. 2.

Oh, if all would but understand this profound truth, that the reign of Jesus Christ is not of this world! Proud and envious men would at once cease trying to destroy this divine kingdom, reflecting that what is spiritual is not subject to corruption and death. *"For He does not steal their mortal goods from the powerful ones, who gives the Kingdom of Heaven to the meek,"* [1] sings Holy Church.

If worldly potentates only considered the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, they would not allow any spark of envy in their hearts at seeing this kingdom spread and made stable. The faithful also would not be led into scandal at seeing it opposed and contradicted, knowing that those obstacles come from the devil, who is the enemy of all good and who fears lest the spread of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, wholly spiritual and divine, shake and ruin his own kingdom, the kingdom of the flesh and the passions, because it is written *"that the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh."* [2] We, knowing how amiable and peaceful is the kingdom

[1] Hymn at Vespers on the Feast of the Epiphany.
[2] Gal. V, 17.

of Christ, let us pray with all the warmth of our hearts: *"Thy Kingdom come."* [1] *"Come, O Lord, do not delay; forgive Thy people their sins."* [2]

[1] Matt. VI, 10.
[2] VII Rep. ad Mat. in Dom. 3 Adv.

CHAPTER XII

THE REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST IS DIVINE, UNIVERSAL AND ETERNAL

In order to better understand the nature of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, it is useful to compare it with the kingdoms of earthly monarchs. This comparison will help us to understand the true characteristic of His kingdom and so make us prize and love it more. It will lead us to consecrate ourselves entirely to this tender King of our hearts as His faithful and devoted subjects.

Many and deep are the differences which distinguish the kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the kingdoms of the world. However, all these differences can be brought under four headings—the origin, the extension, the duration and the form under which the royal power of Jesus Christ is exercised. Of these four heads of difference, the last one, taken from the form or manner with which Jesus Christ displays His regal power, is for

us the most important, as it gives us the distinctive mark of His kingly dignity. We will then treat of it in a special chapter and dwell here briefly on the first three marks of His kingdom, that is, its divine origin, its universality and its eternal duration.

In the first place, the kingdom of our blessed Saviour is distinguished from the kingdoms of earthly princes by its origin, which is exclusively divine. Jesus was constituted King of the universe, not by the will of man or by circumstances of birth or fortune, but by the express will of His Father.

All authority, it is true, emanates in its final analysis from God; but in the case of temporal kingdoms, there are various secondary causes which determine the conferring of power on one individual rather than on another. So, royal dignity is sometimes acquired by right of birth; sometimes it is conferred by the will of the people; and sometimes it is obtained by some conspicuous work done for the welfare of the people or some great feat of military prowess.

But in the case of Our Lord Jesus Christ, none of these causes were brought into play.

It was the Word of God Himself, hypostatically united to His most holy Humanity, which was the source of His supremacy over the whole universe. From this divine fountainhead He derived all those qualities which a king needs to govern and rule his subjects, to aid them with his power and to help them with fatherly generosity in their manifold needs. So, in fact, Jesus says of Himself by the mouth of the prophet: *"But I am appointed King by him over Sion his holy mountain."* [1]

If we consider the extension of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, we see that His authority is not limited to one people, one territory, or one nation, but it embraces in its universality all the peoples of the world: *"And He shall rule from sea to sea: and from the river unto the ends of the earth."* [2] Nor is it possible for any one to withdraw himself from the rule of Jesus Christ. For, from the very moment that a rational being comes into the world, it belongs by right divine to the dominion of Jesus Christ.

Civilized peoples and barbarians, great and small, rich and poor, are His subjects and owe

[1] Ps. II, 6. [2] Ps. LXXI, 8.

Him honor, glory and obedience, because He has redeemed all with His precious blood. The most powerful monarchs, the most magnificent conquerors belong to His kingdom and are His servants, not less than the rest of humanity; nor is there any one that can withdraw from His sway. The holy Kings Louis of France, Stephen of Hungary, Ferdinand of Spain, Edward the Confessor of England, Henry of Germany and Canute of Sweden, realized indeed this truth, when they deemed it a duty to lay their crowns and scepters at the feet of Jesus Christ, glorying to be called His servants more than in receiving the homage and reverence of their subjects.

If we now compare the duration of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, we again find ground for a substantial difference between His regal dignity and that of the kings of the earth. An earthly king, however long he may live, loses at his death all authority over those who were once his subjects. Death levels each earthly sovereign to the least of his servants, discrowns him, and breaks in his hand the scepter that made his subjects tremble. Not so with our King, Jesus Christ. As He rose to an im-

mortal and glorious life and is no longer subject to the mutableness of earthly things, so He continues to exercise His royal power forever, so that *"in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth and under the earth."* [1]

There is yet more to say on the subject. It is impossible for an earthly king to begin to reign before he exists. But our King, Jesus Christ, and He alone, has this prerogative that His kingdom embraces all time, past, present and future. Even before He was born, He in some fashion already ruled over the world: *"God is our King before ages."* [2] He ruled, indeed, as God omnipotent on whom Heaven and earth depend. But as Man also His reign came into being with the very beginning of the world. For the Father, from that moment, disposed all things in view of that absolute power which His Son made Man was one day to possess. The angels from the beginning acknowledged and adored Him as the one great King who would sit one day at the right hand of the Father. The prophets sung of Him as though He were present before their

[1] Philippians II, 10. [2] Ps. LXXIII, 12.

eyes. The kings of Israel, in the full exercise of their power, were the types, though imperfect ones, destined to prefigure what Pilate would later express, when showing Jesus to the Jews with these words: *"Ecce Rex vester."*

The reign of Jesus Christ, as it had no beginning, so will it never have an end. Time flows and the course of human generations will come to an end, but the reign of Jesus Christ will last forever.[1] His blessed kingdom, so ardently invoked and desired by the patriarchs, prophets and just men of the Old Testament, will continue for all eternity, because for all eternity the most holy Humanity of Jesus will shine, bright as the sun in the glory of paradise. Its sight will be an everlasting reward to the just whom He Himself will have saved and who will owe to Him their eternal happiness. In the vision of this same Humanity all the angels and saints in paradise shall be blessed. *"For that Emperor who reigns above . . . in all parts He rules and there holds sway; there is his city and his high seat: O happy whom he chooses for it."* [2]

Now, then, the kingdom of Jesus Christ em-

[1] Luke I, 33. [2] *Inferno* I l. 124 trans. Dr. J. A. Carlyle.

braces all time, and even stretches beyond time. It began with the creation of the world and will last forever: *"Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages: and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."* [1] Here, then, are the first three heads of difference between the kingdom of Jesus Christ and that of an earthly king. The former does not come from man, but directly from God; it is not restricted to a span of territory, but extends to all the people of the world; it is not limited to an epoch, but embraces all time, even continuing to all eternity. Earthly kingdoms, on the contrary, are of weak origin, limited in their extent and of short duration.

But we must now turn to the principal difference which distinguishes the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ from that of earthly kings, namely, the manner in which Our Lord exercises His authority over men. We shall see how this very difference gives rise to the glorious title of King of our hearts which we claim for our divine Saviour.

[1] Ps. CXLIV, 13.

CHAPTER XIII

JESUS CHRIST, KING AND CENTER OF ALL HEARTS

We have shown, in the preceding chapter, how the kingdom of Jesus Christ is distinguished from that of the princes of the earth by its divine origin, its universality and its infinite duration. But there is a still more deep difference, which consists in the manner in which this most tender King displays His regal power over mankind. Earthly kings exercise their power over the bodies of their subjects; our King, Jesus Christ, on the contrary, exercises it over the souls and hearts of men; wherefore is He properly called the King of our hearts.

We do not mean to say by this that Jesus Christ has no power over our bodies. He is King and head of the whole human society and of every member of it, and not only with regard to their souls but to their bodies as well, nor in the spiritual order only but also in the

temporal, because all men are subjected to Him with their whole person and all their faculties. But what constitutes the special character of the royal dignity of Jesus is the fact that it is exercised even over the hearts of men, nay, that these hearts are its proper field of action, while this tender King moves us with equal force and sweetness whithersoever He will.

This invisible and irresistible power is distinctive of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Therein lies a characteristic quite His own, and it is this attribute of our most loving Lord that we intend to recognize and honor in the practice of devotion to His most Sacred Heart. The Heart of Jesus, then, represents the royal power which He exercises over the hearts of men. It represents His dignity as King of our hearts.

It may now be useful to turn to the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as it was manifested to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and which, with the authority of the Church, is proposed to the veneration of the faithful. Let us attentively consider the sacred emblem, the unique emblem which adorns this image. It

explains and proclaims eloquently the proper nature of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In this image Jesus has no jeweled crown as have the kings of the earth.[1] He holds in His hand no scepter and wears no sword at His side. He only points to His Heart, either shown in relief on His breast or made visible through the opening in His side.

What does this mean, if not that Jesus Christ wishes us to understand that His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and His power is exercised over our hearts by the virtue, sweet and strong, of His grace, which penetrates to the innermost recesses of our souls?

The enemies of Jesus Christ, in order to make Him an object of jesting and derision, decked Him out during His passion with mock symbols of royalty, and He consented to be thus treated in order to make us understand better that He is not a king like those of the earth, but a king of a higher order. The Governor's soldiers, when they had scourged Jesus,

[1] It is befitting here to record the declaration of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, that it is not suitable to set a crown upon the image of the Heart of Jesus. (Pius X, Ep. *Me taedet,* July 9, 1908. *Il Monitore ecclesiast.,* 2ª Serie, Vol. X, p. 315.)

led Him to the atrium of the official residence and a whole band gathered round Him. After having despoiled Him of His garments, they clothed Him in a purple robe and plaiting a crown of thorns they set it on His head, they placed a reed in His royal hand and finally knelt in adoration before Him.[1]

Now, to what end did Our Lord allow all these attributes of derisive royalty to be put on Him, if not to make us understand this solemn truth, that the nature of His royal dignity is other than that of earthly kings, and that His power is not evinced by force of arms, but by means of meekness and love. He need not have recourse to the attire of pomp and glory, nor to any attribute of authority and right, in order to reign over man's heart. The only ornament which He chooses is the emblem of His Sacred Heart displayed shining on His breast, a sign which truly signifies the spiritual nature of His kingdom.

In this way Jesus wished to show the world that He is King of our hearts and that He exercises His royal power not so much over our bodies and over our exterior actions, as

[1] Matth. XXVII, 22-29; Mark XV, 18-19; John XIX, 3.

do the kings of the earth, but over our souls and within our hearts. In these He penetrates by His grace, overcoming with admirable force and sweetness all our reluctance, and commanding all the affections and motions of our hearts. Yes, Christ reigns: but over our hearts; Christ conquers: but by the sweetness of His grace; Christ commands: but His command bends our wills to perfect obedience. "Christ reigns. Christ conquers. Christ commands: Christ frees His people from all evil." —*"Christus regnat. Christus vincit. Christus imperat: Christus ab omni malo plebem suam liberat."* [1]

See how much better is the kingdom of Jesus Christ than that of the kings of the earth. An earthly king can, with the material resources at his disposal, set in motion armies of soldiers, make them march like one man; he can with the force of his armies subdue his foes beneath his scepter, but he cannot change the hearts or the wills of his subjects, he cannot make any of his subjects do out of pure love what this man otherwise would not like to do.

[1] Inscription on the obelisk of Sixtus V in the piazza of St. Peter at Rome.

It may happen, and it not infrequently does happen, that the minds of those whom an earthly king has subjected to his sway become, after being conquered, yet more estranged from him than they were at first; and that, in spite of all the means at the conqueror's disposal, the conquered keep and nourish in their hearts a mortal hatred against their new lord. But Jesus exercises His power in a far more sublime fashion. He penetrates with His grace into the most secret depths of the human heart. In response to His touch, the will that was at first ill-disposed and rebellious becomes humble and meek. The regal dignity and power of this King of our hearts is evinced by a mysterious weapon which is His own Heart and the love with which it burns. It subdues and wins over the hearts of men. *"Cor Jesu, Rex et Centrum omnium cordium."*

Oh, let us bend our wills to so mighty and benign a King; let us follow the impulse of His grace and submit entirely to His rule.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW JESUS CHRIST EXERCISED HIS SOVEREIGN POWER OVER THE HEARTS OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

JESUS CHRIST, our King and most tender Sovereign, reigns and triumphs over the hearts of men even when these are unfaithful and rebellious, and He Himself seems helpless and unarmed. It will be well to recall here the conversion of St. Peter after his threefold denial and that of St. Paul when still seeking to slay the followers of the Nazarene.

Let us pause to consider Peter in the house of Caiphas. Jesus, as though He were the most guilty man in the world, had been for hours subjected to a shameful inquisition. He had been buffeted and insulted as though He were the vilest of criminals; and sentence of death had finally been passed upon Him. Now Peter, the chief of Jesus' disciples, loaded by Him with kindnesses and honors, denies his

Master before a crowd of people out of fear of a mere servant. He denies Him not once only, but three times over, and confirms his cowardly denial with cursing and swearing.

What does Jesus do? How does He exercise His sovereignty while in so abject a condition? Indeed, never have His gentle power and His sweet clemency been so manifest as in this tragic moment. He has no need of weapons, no need of soldiers, to reclaim and reconquer the heart of His faithless disciple. A look is enough. *"And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as he had said: Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter, going out, wept bitterly."* [1] This loving look from Jesus pierces to the depths of the Apostle's heart, conquers him, subdues him, and renders him so passionately attached to his dear Master as later to make him worthy of sharing in the same manner of death as Jesus Himself had suffered, the death of the cross.

From the example of St. Peter let us pass on to that of St. Paul. This future Apostle

[1] Luke XXII, 61, 62; Matth. XXVI, 75; Mark XIV, 72.

of Christ appears at first to have been possessed with a fiendish fury against the early Christians. He went about laying waste the Church, entering the houses and violently ill-treating those who believed in Jesus, dragging away men and women and getting them cruelly cast into prison.[1] Thus, his fury grew with what it fed on, that is, his hatred of the Christian name, until one day breathing forth threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he approached the high priest and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, in order that he might bring bound to Jerusalem as many men and women as he could find of the Christian faith.[2]

No doubt an earthly king would have been able, with soldiers and weapons, to arrest, overthrow and enchain a foe of this sort, and get rid of him by throwing him into prison or hanging him on a gallows. But no monarch, be he ever so powerful, could have succeeded in suddenly changing the man's heart so as to render him a docile subject, a faithful servant, an approved friend, ready to lay down his life, a thousand lives if he had them, for Him whom

[1] Acts VIII, 3. [2] Acts IX, 1-2.

he had formerly hated to the death. But what earthly kings could not do, this the Sacred Heart of Our Lord did.

Paul was already drawing near the town of Damascus, when suddenly a bright light shone about him and he fell trembling to the ground. At the same time a voice was heard to say in his ear: *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"* [1] And he answered: *"Who art thou, Lord!"* And Our Lord said to him: *"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad."* And Paul, trembling and astonished, said to the Lord: *"Lord what will thou have me to do?"* [2]

See what marvelous power the King of our hearts possesses. But a moment before, Paul thought of nothing, sought for nothing, but the oppression of the disciples of Jesus and the destruction of His name. Now his heart is softened and he abandons himself in all and through all, to the will of Jesus. How could so sudden and deep-rooted a change take place in his soul, if not because the Heart of Jesus, the great King of all hearts, had touched him with His most powerful grace, and from a

[1] Acts IX, 4. [2] *Ibid,* IX, 5-6.

ravenous wolf had made him a lamb of His flock, the chosen Apostle of His name?

See how splendid are the victories won by the Heart of Jesus over those two Apostles whom He had destined to be the main pillars of His Church. It is not to be wondered at if these, on their part, knew nothing more dear than to preach the royal dignity of this sweetest and most loving of hearts to all the world. So, St. Peter, in one of his first sermons preached at Jerusalem, after the day of Pentecost, speaking to the Jewish Sanhedrin which had forbidden him to utter the name of Jesus, answered: *"We ought to obey God rather than men. . . . Him* (i.e., Jesus), *hath God exalted with his right hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins."* [1] As though to say that Jesus Christ is indeed King and Prince, but King and Prince of love; who is to reign over the hearts of men purified by penance through the remission of their sins, as the result of His death on the Cross.

So, too, the Apostle St. Paul, mindful of the vast benefits he had received from Jesus

[1] Acts V, 29, 31.

Christ Himself, who by the irresistible force of His love had subjected him to His sweet service, never ceased extolling His reign of peace and happiness. *"Giving thanks to God the Father who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the Saints in light. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."* [1]

But the glorious conquests of the Heart of Jesus are not limited to these two Apostles. The annals of the Church are full of such glorious happenings. There is no age, no nation, no class of people, among whom we have not to note some such stupendous conversion due to the magic power of this dear King of our hearts, from the first centuries of the Church to our own day. To cite but a few, who has not wondered at hearing the fashion in which this glorious Monarch has taken loving possession of hearts so rebellious at first as those of St. Augustine, St. Peregrine Laziosi, of St. Ignatius Loyola? But it would be too long to rehearse the entire list of conquests achieved by this divine Heart, as patient as it is strong

[1] Col. I, 12, 13.

and victorious. They live in every one's memory, the names of all those illustrious people who in times nearer our own are, as it were, glorious trophies of the grace of this most tender Heart.

O Jesus, King and Center of all hearts, do take possession of my poor heart also, lead it whither Thou willest; make it Thy slave, and cause it to beat only for Thee, without any affection that is not in accordance with Thy will and with Thy most holy desires.

CHAPTER XV

QUALITIES AND PREROGATIVES OF JESUS CHRIST, KING OF OUR HEARTS

JESUS CHRIST is King indeed, not as the kings of the earth are, but in a far nobler way. The secret of His power lies in His Sacred Heart, the fountain and source of penetrating and life-giving love. This love He exercises with strong and sweet power in the very depths of our hearts, conquering all reluctance and leading mankind as trophies of His victory, to the throne of His eternal Father.

But if Jesus is the King of our hearts, it is needful that He should be adorned with all the qualities and prerogatives which pertain to His royal dignity. Just as the Father had decreed that His Son made Man should be indeed King and Lord of the universe, so it was His will that He should be endowed with all those gifts and prerogatives which should

accompany so great a dignity and ensure its fruitful exercise. Now, the prerogatives necessary in him who comes as a king to rule over his people are those very attributes which arise out of the duties inherent in that dignity. Let us see, then, what these duties are; but beforehand, it is necessary to dispel a false notion about authority which has crept into the world of late.

Indeed, it would be a great mistake to judge of the royal dignity of our divine Saviour according to the modern standard regarding the origin of authority. According to these principles, a sovereign is but the representative of the people from whom he derives the authority, which he only displays subject to their will. This standard, erroneous when applied to earthly kings, becomes altogether heretical if applied to the King of our hearts. As all authority comes from God, so the full power that Jesus possesses over mankind was received from His Father, who established His only-begotten Son made Man, King and Sovereign of the universe in the fullest sense of the word. At the same time, He ordained that Jesus, in exercising over His subjects those exalted

functions, those sublime offices, which are proper to the regal dignity, should be endowed with all the qualities and prerogatives necessary to the suitable fulfillment of these offices and which ensure their happy issue. Now, what are these offices?

In the first place, one invested with regal dignity is, by that very fact, placed over other people, as their leader and guide. To him, therefore, wisdom and prudence are needful in order that he may lead his subjects by virtuous paths to their wished-for happiness. Beyond that, a king ought to be the father of his people, and as such, he should provide for their welfare and supply their necessities. Therefore, he must love them unfeignedly, with a love rooted in the depths of his heart, not for the sake of his own advantage but for the good of his people. Moreover, the sovereign must be, as it were, the judge of his people, and as the living rule of justice. He must therefore, by the equity of his decisions, seek to reëstablish the order of justice and peace where it has been destroyed. Hence, he should harbor in his heart a high sense of what is honest and just, together with an in-

tense desire to combat iniquity and render justice triumphant.

But besides these interior qualities, a king must also possess those prerogatives which secure happy and lasting results to his activities among his people. Being their born defender, he should arm himself with courage in order to wage war against the enemies of his country. Beyond that, it is his part to supply his subjects' necessities; he must, therefore, have at his disposal a sufficient treasury with which to relieve the poor and needy and prevent their suffering, misery and hunger. Lastly, in order that a king may suitably display his beneficent action toward his subjects, it is necessary that he should be revered and obeyed by them as is befitting. To this end he must be surrounded with a halo of majesty which should distinguish him from others and assure him their homage and reverence.

Now, all these qualities proper to good kings and necessary in those who govern for the good of their people, God conferred abundantly on His only-begotten Son made Man. When appointing Him King over mankind, He endowed Him with the aforesaid prerogatives

in order that He should exercise His high office as King of our hearts in all its perfection. With sentiments of infinite complacency the Father enriched His Son with wisdom and prudence to reign over the people committed to His care: *"Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad in thy lips."* [1] He poured into His heart a deep-rooted love for the people whom He came to save: *"Christ hath loved us and hath delivered himself up for us."* [2] He inspired Him with a high sense of justice to discern good from evil: *"The scepter of thy kingdom is a scepter of uprightness."* [3] He gave Him irresistible force to conquer all His enemies: *"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty."* [4] He enriched Him with His treasure of riches so that He might scatter it among His people: *"Glory and wealth shall be in his house."* [5] Finally He crowned Him with a halo of majesty and glory which extorts wonder and homage even from His enemies: *"With thy comeliness and thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously, and reign."* [6]

[1] Ps. XLIV, 3. [3] Ps. XLIV, 9. [5] Ps. CXI, 3.
[2] Eph. V, 2. [4] Ps. XLIV, 4. [6] Ps. XLIV, 5.

Along with all this, we must remember that the kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ is not worldly but spiritual; that He conquers not by the sword, but by love; that He is not King over our bodies only, but rather, and indeed especially, that He is King and Center of all hearts, as is given us to understand by the emblem of His most Sacred Heart under which we love to venerate and adore Him.

But it is time that we should pass on to consider, one by one, these beautiful prerogatives of the Heart of Jesus. Thus shall we endeavor to grow in love toward Him; for the better we know this tender King of our hearts, the more inclined are we to love Him and to be united to Him.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WISDOM OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

MANY are the prerogatives with which it pleased the eternal Father to enrich the most holy soul of Jesus Christ so that He might worthily, from the beginning of His mortal life, fulfill His high office of King of our hearts.

Among these prerogatives the first that calls for our attention is the abundance of wisdom and heavenly knowledge which the Holy Spirit poured into His soul from the moment of His conception in the womb of our blessed Lady. In that blissful instant the soul of our most loving Lord was filled with all the knowledge which could adorn it and make it more able to exercise its sweet and strong rule over the hearts of men.

The human intellect of Jesus, then, was first admitted to partake of the immediate vision of the Divine Essence, a vision which is called

beatific because it fills the soul with infinite joy and makes it perfectly blessed. Besides that, this same intellect, by the direct operation of the Divinity hypostatically united to it, was, like the intellects of angels, and even more than they, enriched with all the knowledge that could enable Jesus as man to guide and benefit the whole human race which is subject to Him.

Thus, Jesus Christ, from the moment of His conception, knew with the clearest vision, every man and woman that ever was or will be, with all the personal inclinations, good or bad, the miseries and temptations, affections and desires of each one. He knew, too, all the circumstances, good or bad, all the perils, all the temptations in which we should find ourselves in the course of our mortal life. He penetrated into all our most secret thoughts while clearly knowing which is the most efficacious way of gaining our love and of overcoming, if need be, any diffidence in our soul. He gazed into the most hidden wounds of each human heart, He knew its thousand weaknesses, its hidden resources, all those endless ways in which each of us lives and displays his personality. He searched with His mind's eye even

to the bottom of that treasure of generosity of which our heart is capable, provided it be willing to put it out, while, on the contrary, He measured that abyss of wickedness and malice in which we can sink if we choose the way of evil.

All, then, that belongs to us, both within and without, even if it be a mystery to our own eyes, was seen through and through by the penetrating gaze of Jesus. No consideration of any one individual person hindered Him from the perfect knowledge and consideration of another, however many human beings there were or were going to be on the earth.

Now, the reason of this vast knowledge in the soul of Jesus Christ is none other than the illumination of the divine Word who knows all things, sees all things, and penetrates all things. The Word, then, hypostatically united to the most holy soul of Jesus, communicated to it, by means of that knowledge called infused, a large share of His infinite wisdom and knowledge.

Beautiful are the verses in which Dante has expressed this theological truth: *"Thou holdest that unto the breast wherefrom the rib*

was drawn to form the beauteous cheek for whose palate all the world doth pay, and unto that which, thrust by the lance, made satisfaction both for past and future, such as to turn the scale against all trespass, such light as human nature may receive was all infused by that same Worth which made the one and the other." [1]

Marvelous indeed is the treasure of knowledge in the soul of Jesus Christ. This knowledge far surpasses that of the highest among the angels, because to no angel, not even to the seraphim and cherubim, was given so great a dignity and power over the hearts of men. Oh, how joyful we should be in knowing that there is a Man like ourselves in nature but immeasurably our superior in grace, who knows perfectly and penetrates all our thoughts, even the most hidden, who sees all our wishes, who measures with His mind's eye our miseries, our sufferings, our apprehensions. Nor does He know these things out of vain curiosity, or for the pleasure of beguiling Himself with so varied a sight, but in order to display His love

[1] "Paradiso," translated by P. H. Wicksteed, Canto XIII, v. 37, foll.

for us, to be sorry for us, to help us, to encourage us to do good, to keep us out of harm.

In this fashion, then, the Father did enrich the soul of Jesus, King and Center of our hearts, with a knowledge almost infinite, so that He could be solicitous for each of us, knowing all our needs and imperfections. We may, then, justly invoke Him: *"Cor Jesu, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiæ et scientiæ."*—"Heart of Jesus, in which are all the treasures of wisdom and science."

Be Thou blessed, O most sweet King of my heart, for the perfect knowledge Thou hast of me. I should be ashamed, indeed, I so wretched, so impure, so imperfect, of being seen and known by Thee who art so great and beautiful, so holy and immaculate. But as I know that Thou makest no use of Thy knowledge save to pity and help me; and, in spite of my unworthiness, to love me always more, therefore I am glad to be the object of Thy consideration. And beyond that, confiding in Thy goodness, I myself open my heart to Thee. I show Thee all my wretchedness, all the wounds of my soul, all my sorrows, all my difficulties, all my dreads, all my fears, as to my

most dear King and Lord. Thou art the most skillful Physician of my soul who at a mere glance sees all my diseases, knows all my sufferings, beholds all the tempests of my heart. At the same time, with equal ease, Thou canst cure my evils and bestow on me perfect peace and tranquillity in the full conformity of all my affections with the most just, most exalted and most loving will of God.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS FOR MEN

It would be a cause of little comfort for us to know that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been enriched with endless treasures of wisdom and knowledge, were we not to learn at the same time that the Giver of all good things inspired that same Heart with a most tender and ardent love for each of us. This love, indeed, is calculated to fill us with confidence and consolation in all our trials, however great these may be. For this reason we proclaim and invoke in truth this most Sacred Heart, the fountain of all consolation: *"Cor Jesu, fons totius consolationis."*

The love which springs from charity is the first and most noble growth of divine grace. It is therefore impossible that any one devoid of grace should have a heart replenished with true love for his neighbor. Now, Jesus Christ,

from the very first moment of His conception in the virginal womb of our blessed Lady, received the gift of grace from the Holy Ghost in a measure not vouchsafed to any other living creature; indeed, He received it beyond measure, as St. John says.[1] In fact, this divine Heart was filled to overflowing with sanctifying grace, because grace was communicated to it immediately by the Word, to whom its sacred Humanity was hypostatically united, and because this very grace was destined to make the Heart of Jesus the holy temple of God: *"Cor Jesu, templum Dei sanctum."* For this reason, this divine Heart is a burning furnace of charity: *"Cor Jesu, fornax ardens caritatis."* It does not crave for anything but our good, and is always ready to procure it. It does not live for itself, but for us, as a loving mother whose thought day and night is always for her tender offspring, who gives herself no peace as long as her beloved child is exposed to perils or is a prey to grief.

Indeed, we cannot find any better type of the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for us than in the love which a father and mother

[1] John III, 34.

bear toward a dear son. When we have said fatherly and motherly love, we have said all. But, with us, fatherly love is less demonstrative, yet stronger; motherly love, on the contrary, is more disinterested, more heroic, yet less reasoned. Now, the moment God gave us Jesus as the Author of our salvation, He poured into His Sacred Heart the strongest love of a father and the tenderest love of a mother, with all the good qualities, and none of the defects, of both. And this love bears with it five characteristics which mark the love of parents for their children, the consideration of which will give us a better understanding of the love of Jesus for mankind.

First of all, the love of a father and mother for their children is universal; it extends equally to all. So, Jesus loves all men with a love sincere and deep. This moreover must be noticed, that unlike what happens among us, the love of Jesus, although divided among so many, remains undiminished for each one. By an act of the power and goodness of God, Jesus Christ loves each of us as if we were alone in the world, which made St. Paul exclaim: *"He loved me, and delivered Himself*

for me." [1] In fact, because of the special disposition of Divine Goodness, Jesus loves every man as though that man were all men, and He loves all men as one man. Therefore, it is fitly said of the Heart of Jesus: "And of His fullness we all have received."—"*Cor Jesu, de cuius plenitudine omnes nos accepimus.*" [2]

Besides this, the love of Jesus is absolutely pure and disinterested. Our divine Saviour loves us, not for any good that He may expect from us, but simply for our good. The Apostle St. Paul describes this beautiful quality when addressing the Corinthians; he speaks thus of his own love for them: "*For I seek not the things that are yours, but you. For neither ought the children to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls: although loving you more, I be loved less.*" [3] Now, the love of the Heart of Jesus toward us is certainly not less disinterested than the love of St. Paul for the faithful of Corinth. Our divine Lord seeks only our good, and even to those who repay Him with

[1] Gal. II, 20. [2] John I, 16. [3] 2 Cor. XII, 14-15.

ingratitude He does not cease to open the treasure of His mercy.

Another characteristic of the love of Jesus for men is its generosity. This tender Saviour did not love us by words, but by deeds, when He gave Himself to us as our Companion on the pilgrimage of this life, as our Food in the Holy Eucharist, as our Ransom in His most cruel death on the cross, as our Reward in His own eternal bliss.

"Se nascens dedit socium;	"At birth our brother He became;
Convescens in edulium;	At meat Himself as food He gives;
Se moriens in pretium;	To ransom us He died in shame;
Se regnans dat in præmium." [1]	As our reward, in bliss He lives." [2]

Truly, the Heart of Jesus gave us no more because He could give no more, and therefore with reason we invoke Him: "Heart of Jesus, filled with goodness and love."—*"Cor Jesu, bonitate et amore plenum."*

Moreover, the love of Jesus is a wise and

[1] Hymn for Lauds on the Feast of *Corpus Christi.*
[2] Tr. Rev. E. Caswall.

discerning love. Our most merciful Lord sees what is good for us and gives it to us, though maybe at times we wish for something beyond what He has bestowed. But He knows what may profit us. Wherefore if, in our prayers, we ask for what might prove harmful to us, He does not for that reason cease to hear us, but gives us, instead of what we ask, graces which are for our spiritual good. Rightly, therefore, do we also invoke Him with confidence: "Heart of Jesus, rich to all those who invoke Thee."—*"Cor Jesu, dives in omnes qui invocant Te."*

Above all, the love of Jesus is an unquenchable, unconquerable love. Be it ever so neglected, so unanswered, so ill repaid with ingratitude and insults, it none the less never ceases to burn in that divine Heart as in a glowing furnace, for it is written: *"Many waters cannot quench charity."* [1] Although filled with reproaches, and bruised for our sins, the Heart of Jesus never ceases to beat out of sheer love for its very offenders. *"Cor Jesu, saturatum opprobriis."—"Cor Jesu, attritum propter scelera nostra."*

[1] Canticle, VIII, 7.

O love of the Heart of Jesus, who can measure it? Who can bear in mind or, what is more, value and appreciate with heart-felt affection, the greatness, the immensity of this mystery of love, great and vast as the sea, deep and high as the heavens. For never was there an earthly king who loved his subjects as the King of our hearts has loved us.

Well did St. Paul pray that the Corinthians *"might be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth* (of the love of Jesus for us), *to know also the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge, that they might be filled unto all the fullness of God."*[1] With great reason, then, Jesus, appearing to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and showing her His Sacred Heart, exclaimed: *"Behold this Heart which has so loved men!"*

[1] Eph. III, 18-19.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, FOUNT OF ALL JUSTICE

JESUS CHRIST is our King. It is a king's business to vindicate justice. It was therefore needful that Jesus Christ should have a keen sense of what is just, that He should be filled with pure and enlightened zeal for justice. This was so much the more necessary, because He exercises His sovereignty over the hearts of men, and has the task of reconciling them to His eternal Father and filling them with celestial peace which is indeed the fruit of justice. Hence, He is fittingly invoked: "Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation." "—*Cor Jesu, pax et reconciliatio nostra.*" But how came the Sacred Heart of our King, Jesus Christ, to be filled with this keen sense of justice?

In the first place, our loving Saviour, knowing more than any other rational being, even than the angels, the infinite kindness and great-

ness of God, can estimate all the enormity of sin which is a direct offense against the Divine Majesty. He sees how sin deprives God of the honor due to Him as Lord of the universe whom all things should obey. For God is a most loving Father, worthy of the love of all, to whom all owe gratitude for countless favors received at His hand. And so, the Heart of our King, Jesus Christ, is filled with the most exalted sense of justice; justice, moreover, not bereft of mercy and love. For this reason we invoke Him: "Heart of Jesus, sanctuary of justice and love."—*"Cor Jesu iustitiæ et amoris receptaculum."* As a victim of sweet savor, He consumes Himself, offers Himself to God, to blot out all injuries done to the Divine Majesty by all our sins and unfaithfulnesses: "Heart of Jesus, a victim for sinners"—*"Cor Jesu victima peccatorum."*

On the other hand, our most loving Saviour sees clearly the harm which sin does to our souls. For sin alienates us from God, the fount of all good, and deprives us of divine grace, making us deserving to be hurled into the abyss of perdition and misery. Therefore, like the King of Love that He is, Jesus only

desires to free us from such cruel bondage. This He does by continuing to offer Himself as a victim of propitiation for our sins: *"Cor Jesu, propitiatio pro peccatis nostris."*

This prerogative of the Heart of Jesus, His justice, is beautifully expressed in Psalm forty-four, which is as it were the nuptial hymn in which is celebrated Our Lord's mystical espousals with His beloved Bride, the Church: *"Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of thy kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;"* [1] which is as much as to say: O Christ Jesus, Thou who art true God and true King of our hearts, Thou possessest a kingdom which is not like those of the monarchs of the earth which speedily disappear. For Thy kingdom is no kingdom of a moment, a fading kingdom; but eternal and imperishable. It shall have no end, because it is a kingdom entirely based on justice.

In fact, this kingdom of His, Jesus Christ administers with uprightness and equity: *"Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."* [2]

[1] Ps. XLIV, 6. [2] *Ibid.* 7.

That is to say, Thou reignest, O King of Love, over the hearts of all mankind, like the good and just Prince that Thou art, with absolute uprightness, prescribing what is just and honest, rewarding the good and drawing the evil-doers toward virtue, because Thy rule of conduct is equity. And in order that Thou mayest reign forever with equity and justice, and that Thou mayest hate iniquity, the Father has anointed Thee with the oil of gladness. This oil, so precious and divine, which strengthens Thee with its fragrance and fills Thy Heart with spiritual joy, overflows also on all Thy faithful subjects, with the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which they receive from Thee.[1]

Now, when was it that this love of justice and its accompanying hatred of sin was infused into the soul of Our Saviour? This took place in the very moment in which His most holy Humanity was hypostatically united to the Divinity: that is, in the moment of His marvelous conception in the womb of our blessed Lady. For love of justice and hatred of iniquity were from that very moment to be

[1] John I, 16. See Acts X, 38.

the guiding motives of all His conduct. He was then invisibly anointed with the oil of gladness and exultation, which was in Him infinitely more abundant than in all other kings, priests or prophets, because He was to reign without end over hearts grown meek and docile at His voice.

Now, how shall Jesus display that sense of justice and equity which informs His Sacred Heart, in the case of those who finally remain indifferent to His gentle entreaties or even prove irrevocably rebellious to His powerful inspirations? We shudder at the mere thought. Yet, we must believe that toward them Jesus exercises His exalted office of King and most just Judge, assigning for their past infidelities and rebellions that measure of punishment preordained by the scale of divine justice. However, He will not cease, for all this, to be the gentle and amiable King that He is; but those wretched beings who will have irrevocably shut their hearts to the sweet influence of His grace will be cut off from the benefit of His love. They will be, sad as it is to think, His irreconcilable foes. Their hearts will be filled with relentless hatred against their great-

est benefactor, whose past favors will remain as an everlasting proof that He left nothing undone to draw them to His love. Those favors will bear witness that it was not through any fault of His that His enemies did not end by being sharers of the eternal happiness which He merited for them by His passion and death.

Beautiful, indeed, and majestic is Our Lord Jesus Christ even in the midst of His torments. Those blood stains which discolor His cloak do not detract from His comeliness, for with that blood He paid our debts. Even the angels seeing Him go forward in such majesty question one another, marveling: *"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength? I that speak justice and am a defender to save."*[1] St. Augustine, contemplating in spirit our most just King and Sovereign, Jesus Christ, found Him fair, beautiful and majestic, in every phase of His life; because He was always just, always guided by a sense of the highest equity: *"He is beautiful in Heaven,"* this great Doctor ex-

[1] Isa. LXIII, 1.

claims, *"beautiful on earth, beautiful in His miracles, beautiful in His scourging, beautiful on the cross, beautiful in His sepulcher."* And this is the reason he gives: *"The highest and truest beauty consists in justice: if, therefore, Jesus was above all just, He was above all beautiful."* [1]

Grant, O Jesus, of Thy great mercy which can conquer all obstacles, that our wills—even the most rebellious—may be bowed, docile and obedient, under the sweet yoke of Thy law, so that we may sing Thy mercy for all eternity.[2]

[1] St. Aug. on Psalm XLIV. [2] Ps. LXXXVIII, 2.

CHAPTER XIX

SPIRIT OF FORTITUDE IN THE KING OF OUR HEARTS, JESUS CHRIST

We have seen hitherto how the Heart of our divine Saviour appears to us surrounded by a halo of heavenly wisdom, burning with the purest flame of love and filled with enlightened zeal for justice. We must now consider the spirit of fortitude with which Our Saviour was endowed.

Indeed, Jesus received from His eternal Father extraordinary strength and power, to be displayed by invisible arms which none, however, could resist. He was to conquer the proudest enemies opposed to the triumph of His work of Redemption. He Himself openly declared this when He said: *"All things are delivered to me by my Father,"* [1] and He repeated this expressly when He sent His apostles to preach the Gospel throughout the world, saying: *"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth."* [2]

[1] Luke X, 22. [2] Matth. XXVIII, 18.

The power with which the Father invested the spirit of Jesus Christ, had regard in the first place to the government of His own body and the control of His own actions, as became the Son of God and the King of all mankind. Therefore, there could be no movement of Our Lord's which was not in harmony with His double dignity of Son of God and King of men No act, no gesture in Him which was not at once worthy of the Deity and becoming to the most perfect of men. No word which could not find an echo in the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity or would not resound as sweet music in the choirs of angels as in the ears of men. In Jesus Christ all was peace, all was harmony, because that divine Heart which did not beat save under the influence of the Holy Ghost, gave an imprint, a divine cadence to all His thoughts, words and deeds.

In vain do artists strive to reproduce in painting the sweet majesty of that divine countenance, the grave and so attractive bearing of that august Personality. Those eyes shining with angelic penetration and seraphic love; those lips whence came forth floods of eloquence which moved all hearts; those fea-

tures which kept men gazing into His face for days together, forgetful of hunger, thirst and weariness; those arms thrown open to embrace with unrestrained affection innocent children and repentant sinners; those hands raised to bless and to point out to the multitude the place of eternal happiness: all these things pass the ability of the most skillful artist. The brush of the best painter will ever be unequal to the task, for none can recapture the effulgent dignity, the strong and sweet majesty of Jesus, any more than a human tongue can rehearse the harmony of His whole wonderful Personality.

Blessed indeed are the holy angels, blessed are the inhabitants of heaven, followers and friends of this divine Heart, because they have the happiness of ever gazing on that ocean of beauty which is the sweet face of Our Redeemer, on which His most holy soul, itself, as it were, irradiated by the presence of the Godhead, has left an impress of supernatural splendor and comeliness. And blessed art thou especially, O blessed Mother who, for thirty-three years, didst drink draught upon draught of that fountain of pure joy, un-

wearedly admiring that sweet and divine Fruit of thy womb, which was so like thyself. For it was in thy womb, O Virgin Mary, that the Father clothed our loving King, Jesus, with that celestial power and with all those gifts that made thy Son the masterpiece of divine art.

But it was not only for His own sake that Our Lord was invested with supernatural strength which made Him the most powerful and at the same time the most glorious of men: "Beautiful above the sons of men."—*"Speciosus forma præ filiis hominum."* [1] It was also for the beings subject to Him, rational or irrational, angelic or human, over which His power was to be exercised.

In the first place, our divine Saviour, by virtue of the marvelous power conceded Him by the Holy Spirit, can illuminate, out of the fullness of His knowledge, all and each reasonable being, whether man or angel. For even the angels are inferior in knowledge and grace to Jesus; and so not only men but even all the hierarchies of angels are illuminated by this divine Heart which, like a most brilliant

[1] Ps. XLIV, 3.

sun, set in the firmament of heaven, shines with a most tender light: *"There is no one that can hide himself from his heat."* [1]

By virtue of that same marvelous power, the Heart of Jesus conquers every opposition or reluctancy in men or angels. No man, however lofty his rank, no angel, however sublime his nature, can resist the will of Our Saviour or thwart His plans. All His enemies are doomed to certain defeat. What Jesus has determined, that must happen. He can truly say: *"My enemies that trouble me, have themselves been weakened, and have fallen. If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear."* [2]

Besides that, the soul of Jesus Christ, as an instrument of the Word, to which it was hypostatically united, had received from the Holy Ghost a special power ordained to produce all those miraculous occurrences which have for their end the fulfillment of the mystery of the Redemption. In fact, the soul of our divine Lord was, as it were, a most excellent instrument of the Godhead. Hence, it received copious grace, not only to work every sort of

[1] Ps. XVIII, 7. [2] Ps. XXVI, 2, 3.

miracle, but also to transfer to others the power of doing similar wonders and even greater, whenever such happenings should serve to further the salvation of mankind.

But our loving Saviour does not exercise this thaumaturgical power save in conformity with the impulses of His Heart full of wisdom and love, and only to the end of making heaven more accessible to men. Therefore, this supernatural power of which we speak is justly attributed to His most Sacred Heart, which we rightly invoke as the House of God and the Gate of Heaven: *"Cor Jesu, domus Dei et porta cœli."* For everything Jesus does is destined to procure the glory of His Father's House and to open to men the Gate of Paradise.

Heart of my Saviour, in virtue of that unbounded power which the Father has granted Thee, conquer, I beseech Thee, all the repugnance of my heart to the divine dispositions, that I may say with truth: *"O Lord, for I am Thy servant: I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid."* [1]

[1] Ps. CXV, 16.

CHAPTER XX

GLORIES OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

THE Heavenly Father was not content with adorning the Heart of His beloved Son made Man with admirable wisdom, with the purest and most ardent love, with an exalted sense of justice and with marvelous power—all attributes befitting, indeed, the King and Sovereign of our hearts. He also chose to surround Him with all those external signs of glory with which the heads of kings are encircled that their subjects may more easily recognize in them the majesty of God, from whom all power comes and whose authority they represent.

In that beautiful epithalamium which is the forty-fourth psalm, David tells of the glory with which God invested the adorable Person of His Son made Man. The Royal Prophet in sublime accents sings Our Lord's praises and His mystical espousals with the Church: *"Thou art beautiful above the sons of men.*

Grace is poured abroad in thy lips; therefore hath God blessed thee forever." [1] Incomparable, indeed, are the prerogatives of the Heart of Jesus. Besides being full of grace and truth, He is presented to us in Holy Writ as: *"Holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens."* [2]

But the Most High had ordained that this inner beauty of Jesus should also be made manifest outwardly, and that the whole course of His mortal life should be lit up by the purest radiance of glory. First, He was glorious in His coming into this world, when the laws of nature were set aside for Him, He being conceived by a Virgin through the operation of the Holy Ghost. He was glorious in His birth, when He came forth from the virginal womb of our blessed Lady without diminishing her honor. He was glorious in His youth when, twelve years old, He who had had no schooling, held speech with the most famous doctors of the law in the principal city of Judea. He was glorious in His preaching, speaking as no man ever did before. He was glorious in His miracles, through which the

[1] Ps. XLIV, 3. [2] Heb. VII, 26.

multitude were brought to believe Him a Prophet. Glorious in His passion and death on the cross, where the incomparable qualities of His Heart shone with so divine a light. Glorious in His resurrection, marvelous in His ascension; most glorious in His sepulcher, which is, even for unbelievers, the object of so much competition: "And His sepulcher shall be glorious."

Great as was the halo of glory with which the Father surrounded His only-begotten Son in this life, far greater was that destined for Him on His departure from among men. What happened with Jesus is different from what happens among us. As long as one of our acquaintances, one of our friends, is alive, we are concerned about him, we think of him, we turn our affections toward him. But when he has left this world and a few years have gone by—who thinks any more about him? Even if at times the memory of his friendship and kindness comes into our minds, we scarcely recapture any of our former warmth of affection. Our love for him has rather grown cold, if indeed it has not died out altogether.

But with Jesus it is not so. Although we

have not seen Him ourselves, although twenty centuries have well nigh elapsed since He left this world, although we know Him to be the target of innumerable contradictions and endless outrages, notwithstanding all this, the thought of Him is alive in the hearts of millions and millions of men who love Him with all the powers of their souls, ready to give up their lives for Him. The followers of Jesus have but one desire, that of seeing Him recognized by all as the most loving Saviour of mankind, as the King and Center of all hearts for all eternity.

With how much truth did Our Lord prophesy of Himself: *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself."*[1] Jesus, notwithstanding His shameful death, notwithstanding the centuries which have elapsed between His mortal days and our times, notwithstanding that His law imposes heavy sacrifices on men, is and always will be an object of the purest, holiest, strongest love on the part of millions and millions of men. And His divine Heart will remain the love-star which draws to itself the most noble and

[1] John XII, 32.

most generous hearts and lifts them up, transforming them into Himself, with the fire of His chaste love. Oh, truly, the Heart of Jesus is the masterpiece of the right hand of the Almighty.

CHAPTER XXI

GLORIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS REFLECTED IN THE CHURCH AND THE SAINTS

God had decreed that the pure light of glory which filled the Sacred Heart of Jesus should reflect itself in the Catholic Church, the Spouse Our Saviour has purchased with His own blood.[1] *"The Queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety. . . . All the glory of the King's daughter is within in golden borders, clothed round about with varieties."*[2]

Holy Church, which Jesus has made His beloved Spouse by the marvelous union which He contracted with her, is yet again His Daughter by the regeneration He procured for her, the symbol of which is the water that issued from His sacred side, by which she was brought to life again. Hence, Jesus Christ loves the Church with a twofold most ardent love: first,

[1] Acts XX, 28. [2] Ps. XLIV, 10, 14.

as His immaculate Spouse, and secondly, as His only-begotten Daughter.

Now, Holy Church is all pure and stainless, *"not having spot or wrinkle,"* [1] and this intrinsic beauty all redounds to the glory of her Spouse and Father, Jesus Christ. But the main beauty of the Church is within, consisting in this, that she possesses the most signal virtues and chiefly an ardent charity which makes her live only for her beloved Spouse. Nevertheless, the Church is also clothed in robes of various colors, by which are meant the outward signs of religious worship, such, for instance, as the beauties of holy ritual and the pomp of sacred ceremonies performed in magnificent temples. In fact, all these things are ordained to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the loving Spouse and Father of the Church, better known, revered and loved, that Heart which is the abyss of all virtues, *"Cor Jesu, virtutum omnium abyssus,"* worthiest object of all praise and honor, *"Cor Jesu, omni laude dignissimum."*

But the glories with which the eternal Father chose to invest the Heart of His beloved

[1] Eph. V, 27.

Son made Man, do not stop here. From this mystical espousal of Christ with the Church a numerous offspring arose, regenerated through the word of truth, and destined to holiness and royal dignity: *"A chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation."*[1] These illustrious children, while reproducing the virtues of their beloved Father, Jesus Christ, bestow on His adorable Heart a marvelous increase of honor and glory. They form around His forehead a beautiful crown composed of the glorious chorus of prophets, the triumphant army of martyrs, the white band of virgins. All these, irradiated with the shining light of that most Sacred Heart, contribute to increase, in an accidental way, its beauty and splendor.

Just as all the colors of the rainbow are virtually contained in one ray of the sun, so in the Sacred Heart of Jesus are found together, as though in a shining constellation, all those prerogatives which in individual saints shine like single stars. And as that white ray of sunshine, when refracted into a prism, breaks up into many colors, distinct and in fair order, so the ray of the charity of Jesus, spring-

[1] I Pet. II, 9.

ing from His loving Heart, when received into the souls of His saints, becomes the origin of all that beautiful variety of virtue and sanctity which distinguishes one from another.

So, we see that the holy apostles, brought up in Our Lord's own school and filled with the abundance of His spirit, are each presented to our admiration with an especial halo of sanctity. In St. Peter we admire the generosity of purpose in following his Master even to death. St. John shines out among the others for the purity and chastity of his life. St. Paul enraptures us with his burning love for Our Lord Jesus Christ, by which he protests that he wishes to know nothing else but Him and Him Crucified. In times nearer our own, we are struck dumb by the spirit of penance of a Francis of Assisi, the heroic humility of a Philip Benizi, the contempt of the world of a Juliana Falconieri, the patience of a Joseph Calasanctius, the gentleness and sweetness under every test of a Francis de Sales, and so forth.

Now, what are all these prerogatives, if not so many manifestations and refractions, so to speak, of the ineffable goodness of the divine

Heart of Jesus? As the different colors of the prism, when united together again, give back a single ray of light, so the different qualities which are resplendent in each of the saints, when put together, make up that heavenly halo which surrounds the divine Heart of Jesus. The Holy Ghost traces in each saint one line or other of the figure of our King; so that all put together, the varied qualities of the different saints may give us an idea, though inadequate, of the ineffable beauty of that adorable Heart in which the Father was well pleased.

Taking, then, all the virtues which have ever adorned mankind—prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, humility, meekness, patience and charity—and making of these one transcendent virtue carried to its highest degree, we have the perfection of the Heart of Jesus, a perfection which no pen can describe, no intellect human or angelic can fully conceive.

Rising on the wings of contemplation up to the throne of our adorable King, Jesus Christ, we may see displayed before Him all the saints, offering Him—the apostles their crowns, the martyrs their palms, the virgins their white

lilies, the pontiffs their stoles of honor, all singing with one voice: *"Benediction and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honor and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen."* [1]

[1] Apocal. VII, 12.

CHAPTER XXII

THE INCOMPARABLE RICHES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

THE glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus surpasses that of every rational being, man or angel. His is a most pure and stainless glory, without shadow of any kind. But it was not enough that our King, Jesus Christ, should be glorious and beautiful in Himself. He has subjects who are poor and needy and who, therefore, cannot be satisfied with the mere glitter of His crown. They have need of help in their want, and company in their misery. Therefore, it was necessary that our King should be rich in order that He might be munificent; that He should be the father of the poor, the helper of the feeble, the protector of the abandoned. Hence, the Father enriched Him beyond the dreams of avarice so that He could be able to deal out help liberally and generously to His subjects.

Oh, the riches of the adorable Heart of

Jesus, riches of our King, of whom the heavens are a seat and the earth a footstool, and to whom by reason of the Divinity hypostatically united to His Humanity, belong all that belongs to the Most High! Well may we, His subjects, rejoice in having such a King. Well may we exult and be glad because those hands, so cruelly pierced for us, cannot but bestow on us precious gifts, copious treasures of grace and salvation. With reason, then, does Holy Church invoke the Heart of this most sweet King: "Heart of Jesus most merciful"— *"Cor Jesu, multæ misericordiæ";* and furthermore: "Heart of Jesus, rich to all those who invoke Thee"—*"Cor Jesu, dives in omnes qui invocant te."*

The unsurpassed riches which the Heart of Jesus lavishes upon us, come to us in a twofold way; that of His clemency and that of His munificence. Clemency is that virtue which stoops compassionately toward the culprit and with a pitiful hand lifts him out of the mire of sin; munificence scatters with a free hand treasures and graces upon the poor, and rejoices to see them enriched and loaded with precious gifts. Now, the Heart of Jesus is

both clement and merciful toward us. The Holy Gospel, which is all interwoven with strands of His clemency and munificence, represents Him to us as a bearer of pardon and peace; and as sowing, wherever He goes, the inexhaustible treasures of His kindness.[1] It will not be amiss to set down here some examples of the munificence and clemency of Jesus.

Let us begin with His munificence. Opening the Holy Scripture, we find that the multitude having followed Jesus for three days to hear His voice were still fasting. What did Our Lord do? Moved by the tenderest pity He cried: *"I have compassion on the multitude."*[2] Immediately, He commanded His apostles to distribute to the crowd the bread and fishes which in His omnipotence He multiplied. When all had had enough, there were still twelve basketfuls left. And the crowd enthusiastic, for this regal munificence, proclaimed Him their King with a loud voice and sought to crown Him, but He fled from them and hid Himself. But this is only a pale image of the liberality with which Jesus treats His faithful subjects.

[1] Acts X, 38. [2] Mark VIII, 2.

This tender Saviour unceasingly pours forth His gifts among men, even such as are His enemies, keeping open to them that inexhaustible treasure of grace, the holy sacraments, which are the means by which the bounteous mercy of His Heart abides with us forever. This mercy displays itself both in the sacraments of the living and in the sacraments of the dead. In the former, that is, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony, it is displayed in the form of munificent gifts; in the latter, that is, in Baptism and Penance, it is displayed in the form of clemency.

Great is the munificence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; great also is its clemency, of which the Psalmist says that it covers the earth.[1]

As the office of mercy is principally to relieve the misery of our neighbor, we may first cast a glance at this same misery, the better to understand how Jesus succors His suffering brethren. See that immense crowd of men, in whose hearts lodges sorrow, on whose foreheads may be read an indescribable unhappi-

[1] Ps. CXVIII, 64.

ness, who lifting their hands toward Heaven exclaim in supplication: *"Give us this day our daily bread":* the bread to sustain this miserable body, but yet much more, the bread which satisfies the famishing soul, the bread which comforts, which gives vigor and strength to continue the pilgrimage of this life between thorns and briars until it reaches the holy mountain of God.

Now, behold Jesus Christ, our beloved King, full of compassion, who, lifting up His eyes to His heavenly Father, blesses the bread, saying: *"This is my body,"* [1] which He afterwards breaks for mankind who await it. O marvelous gift, O sacred banquet! How good, how great, how munificent Thou art in Thy gifts, O King of our hearts! Who would not weep with tenderness at seeing Thee, our glorious Sovereign, more gentle and generous than any mother, give Thy little children, who are Thy own beloved subjects, Thy flesh as food, and Thy own blood as drink? And who would say that this is not the gift worthy of a divine King, nay, the gift above all others; because,

[1] Matth. XXVI, 26; Mark XIV, 22; Luke XXII, 19; I Cor. XI, 24.

as Thou are infinitely powerful, Thou couldst give nothing greater; as Thou art most wise, Thou couldst give nothing better; as Thou art infinitely good, Thou couldst give nothing more dear and sweet.

But this is not the only gift of Jesus to mankind. The Blessed Eucharist is not the only pledge of His love to us unfortunate sons of Adam, who by the fault of our first parents have lost the grace of original justice and now have nothing save pains and miseries, each greater and more discomforting than the other. But our merciful Lord cares and provides for all His subjects, whatever their age and condition.

When the child is still a slave of the devil, Jesus approaches it and erasing from its forehead the ignominious brand of original sin enriches its little soul with divine grace. Later, when the young man is about to enter the combat of life, Jesus girds his side with a sword and covers his breast with a cuirass, anointing him as His soldier. If he falls conquered by the infernal enemy, who continually lies in wait for him, Jesus puts out a pitiful hand to help him and raise him up. Finally, when he

is about to cross the threshold whence there is no return, the merciful Saviour bids His ministers anoint his feet, to give him strength for that last passage; his eyes, to meet his Judge and bear the sight of Him; his hands, that they may be made worthy to receive the palm of victory.

See how universal and how great is the munificence of this Sovereign, the anticipation of whose gifts left the prophets marveling. Even when with horrible effrontery the subject of this King of love hurls himself against His Majesty exclaiming: *"I will not serve,"* [1] what does He do? Does He crush the ingrate under His omnipotent foot, or command the angelic legions which surround Him with naked swords to take vengeance, or to mark him with a sign of His indignation by hurling him into a prison of inextinguishable fire? None of these things. He bends down to the poor wretch and shields Him from the anger of His Father; nay, offering to embrace him, He exclaims: *"Son, what have I done to thee or in what have I caused thee grief? Answer*

[1] Jer. II, 20.

me."[1] And if this son repents, who can tell the ineffable pardoning sweetness of the Heart of Jesus? He comes down from His throne to meet him; He hastens toward him saying to the angels who look on amazed: *"Make merry, because this my son was dead and is come to life again."*[2]

Now, all this Our Lord does not do for one or two of His subjects only, but for all. This He did for our fathers; He does it for us; and He will do it until the end of time for all those who turn to Him with a pure and upright heart.

Such, then, are the ineffable riches of clemency and mercy contained in the most Sacred Heart of our loving Saviour. Oh, blessed he who draws with joy of this fountain of life, the waters of salvation.[3]

[1] Verse in the Mass of the Presanctified for Good Friday.
[2] Luke XV, 24.
[3] Isaias. XII, 3.

CHAPTER XXIII

VICTORIES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS OVER THE WORLD, THE DEVIL AND SIN

THE Eternal Father having put His complacencies in His only-begotten Son made Man, Jesus Christ, our Loving King and Sovereign, adorned His Sacred Heart with glory and honor, so that He might bear, in His humanity, a reflection of the greatness and perfection of the Godhead. But, besides that, He also decreed for His incarnate Son glorious triumphs over all His enemies.

There is in the apocalyptic Revelations of the Seer of Patmos, in the sixth chapter, a vivid allegorical description of the fashion in which Our Lord Jesus Christ was to display His power over His enemies in the course of ages. We shall now set this down, briefly commenting on the different phases of this wonderful description.

In the first place, St. John recounts the following vision. As one of the seven seals was

opened, behold there came forth a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering that he might conquer.[1] Now, whom does this majestic horseman foreshadow? None else than Jesus Christ, our King who, like an emperor triumphing over a conquered city, sits astride of a white horse, by which is signified the innate and unstained purity of His life.

Worldly conquerors, for the most part, stain their conquests by wrong-doing, and their lives are seldom unspotted. Not so, however, with the King of our hearts. He displays His greatness in His immaculate and uncontaminated Humanity, and comes forth with His bow and His crown, conquering that He may conquer. The crown which shines on His head points Him out a King, and the bow proclaims Him a Warrior. Our Lord is indeed a Warrior-King. He Himself says so: *"I came not to send peace, but the sword."* [2]

The power of this King is limitless. With the bow of His divine word He shoots His arrows into His enemies' hearts, and they, falling on their knees at His feet like wounded

[1] Apoc. VI, 2. [2] Matth. X, 34.

men, proclaim Him their King and their beloved Lord: *"Thy arrows are sharp: under Thee shall people fall, into the hearts of the King's enemies."* [1]

But we need not think that the warfare of this King is violent and troublesome. Jesus is said to be sitting on His white steed, that we may know Him to be the King of Peace, of that peace which is indeed acquired only by war, but which, once acquired, begets a joy which passes all understanding.[2] Lastly, this same King comes forth conquering that He may conquer. Conquering, because He has in His passion and death, defeated and laid low the power of the enemies, and He comes forth to spread His teaching throughout the world and take possession, in His triumph, of the human race He has redeemed.

But see, now, how the enemies of this meek and immaculate King hurl themselves furiously against Him to contest His progress. This, too, is pointed out to us in a symbolical vision in the same chapter of the Apocalypse.

When the second seal was opened, St. John saw another horse come forth. This was of a

[1] Ps. XLIV, 6. [2] Phil. IV, 7.

red color and *"to him that sat thereon it was given that he should take peace from the earth: and that they should kill one another, and a great sword was given to him."* [1] What is this red horse bestridden by so horrible a rider, if not the world which, drunk with slaughter, follows, like a tiger athirst for blood, the disciples of Jesus Christ?

As a matter of fact, we see this furious horseman, the world, raging from the beginning of the Church, for three long centuries, against the peaceful children of God. We see him cast loose on them in his rage in those terrible persecutions set on foot by the Roman Emperors, persecutions in which both the pastors and people of the Church of Christ were ruthlessly decimated.

But it was not in those days only that the world persecuted the followers of the Redeemer. There has been no age, no nation in which Christian blood has not been shed, in which some disciples of Jesus Christ have not been put to death. And even now, although it uses apparently less violent methods, at least in civilized countries, notwithstanding, it

[1] Apoc. VI, 4.

carries on fierce persecutions as of old. Now, it snatches Religious from the peace of their cloisters; now, it blackens the character of the Catholic clergy in a thousand fashions; now, it plots malicious schemes against the Supreme Pontiff; now, it disables honorable citizens from public offices, solely because of their fidelity to the Church. In a word, the lovers and followers of this world wage a ceaseless and cruel war against all that are not of their side.

But in vain do they hope to find the peace and happiness for which they crave. The world, symbolized by the red horse, has indeed power to take peace from the earth, but never can it give it back. And on that score, indeed, Christ with His peace and His patience conquered the world.

And we who follow this King of love and peace, who have Him for our Guide and our Leader, we too must conquer the world by patience, suffering its persecutions without despairing, always trusting in the words of our glorious Captain: *"Have confidence: I have overcome the world."* [1] So, we shall triumph

[1] John XVI, 33.

through patience; as St. Luke says: *"In your patience you shall possess your souls."* [1]

But glorious as are the victories of the Sacred Heart of Jesus over the world, not less wonderful are those which He wins over the devil. This we may gather from the following passage in the previously mentioned vision of the Seer of Patmos.

When the red horse had disappeared and the third seal had been opened, St. John saw advancing against our King, Jesus Christ, seated on His white horse, another formidable enemy. This was a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of scales in his hand and gave a little wheat and a little barley for a penny.[2]

In this new symbol is typified heresy, that terrible enemy to Christ and His Gospel. This black horse is ridden by the devil, who lures the faithful from the sweet and wholesome pastures of the revealed truth and gives them nothing but a little wheat—that is, a little truth, mingled with the barley of error.

Now, he who rides this horse, that is, the devil of heresy and error, goes to work by making use of an evil press, that is, bad news-

[1] Luke XXI, 19. [2] Apoc. VI, 5, 6.

papers, to corrupt the faith of Christians. This reading he gives for a grazing-ground to their vanity and curiosity. Unfortunately, many beguiled by misleading words and attracted by fastuous knowledge, are caught by the foe of Jesus Christ and made miserable victims of Satan. Immoral books, irreligious newspapers, these are the snare of souls, and who can number their victims? Through these, earth is covered with the shadow of death and the dark abyss is the richer for an immense spoil.

But the most sweet Heart of our King, Jesus Christ, shines in the world and with its effulgent rays scatters this unclean mist which clouds it over. As a living fountain of light, our sweet Saviour illumines the minds of His faithful people, showing them the way of error in order that they may never depart from the path of truth and justice. His doctrine alone can conquer and put to flight the glooms of falsehood more dense, and thick and more fatal, than the darkness of Egypt.

We must clothe ourselves with the armor of Jesus Christ, and then with the sword of truth fight against deceit and error. But, especially,

let us guard against the least sip of that subtle chalice which the cunning devil of heresy offers us. Far from us be those bad books in which the doctrine of the Church is either openly attacked or furtively travestied. Far from us be those evil publications, which like infamous enchantresses, or rather like the sirens with their deceptive songs, would change us from men into beasts. When we crave for life we shall come to Thee, O Lord; and in the sustaining bread which Thy Church, mistress of truth, will give to us, we shall be satisfied like good children with the milk of their mother.

A third enemy, still more furious and formidable than the world or the devil of error, was seen by St. John to come forward against our King, Jesus Christ, under the shape of a pale and fleshless horse: *"and he that sat upon him, his name was Death. And hell followed him. And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, to kill with the sword, with famine and with death and with the beasts of the earth."* [1]

Oh, what a monstrous enemy this is! To the two foes who came forth first, only a single

[1] Apoc. VI, 8.

power was given, but this one is given a manifold power. He can slay by the sword and by famine; and beyond that, he can glut wild beasts with his conquered foes.

Who is this evil and powerful adversary? Let us interrogate Divine Wisdom and we shall learn that it is the lust of the flesh. For the greater number of lost souls are plunged into eternal torments precisely by the lust of the flesh. This foe is more terrible than any other. It is entrenched not without but within us, in the innermost recesses of our personality. Its nets are spread everywhere, so that there is no solitude however profound where it does not reach, no sanctity however exalted, which it does not besiege and combat. Alas, it has shaken down the greatest pillars of the firmament. The fall of David and that of Solomon should make each one of us tremble for himself.

It is noteworthy that the Apocalypse says that this horse was pallid and had death on its back and was followed by hell. Indeed, lust shatters the joys of the soul and destroys the health of the body as well. Look at that young man with pale face, with languid and

drooping eyes. The poor wretch is a victim of lust. Look at that miserable old man whose white hair, so far from being a crown of glory is an emblem of shame; look at him—without prudence, without judgment, the miserable victim of vice. With reason is this enemy said to be pale and worn out; though in the beginning he appears rosy and attractive.

But, not only are sadness of heart and maladies of the body the inseparable companions of the vice of impurity, but also death. Temporal death, and that a dishonorable one; and, what is far worse, the eternal death of the soul. And finally hell; the abyss in which there is nothing but weeping and mourning and gnashing of teeth.

To this terrible enemy power was given over all the earth. The effects of this power are bound up in the curse launched against the serpent of old: *"Upon thy breast shalt thou go."*[1] And who shall say how terrible are the means this enemy uses to destroy souls? For he strikes and slays with the sword, with hunger and death and the beasts of the earth. Our Lord alone, that invincible Captain, can

[1] Gen. III, 14.

conquer so tremendous a foe. He, in fact, has gone before us in the fight and gives us the arms we need. Do you see that Heart pierced by thorns and surmounted by the cross? Behold the sacred emblem which assures us of victory. Let the thorns and the cross of mortification be our armor and our shield, and the victory is assured.

Our King, Jesus Christ, the new Champion of justice, armed with the word of truth which St. Paul calls the *"sword of the Spirit,"* [1] went forth decked with inimitable beauty to wage war on the world, the flesh and the devil, in order to free His beloved Spouse from these foes. When His conquest was happily complete, He ascended His throne, governing His people with truth, meekness and justice, which are, as it were, the sum total of the Gospel and the virtues most opposed to the false rule of Satan. And this warfare, waged by the right hand of Jesus Christ, without need of any other help, ends in unheard-of triumphs. The hearts of His enemies, pierced as though by invincible arrows, by the efficacy of His word, are by Him reduced to humble subjection and

[1] Eph. VI, 17.

adore Him prostrate at His feet.[1] Oh, how powerful are the victories of our Lord and King, Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

[1] Ps. XLIV, 3-5.

CHAPTER XXIV

ST. MARY MAGDALEN, A TROPHY OF THE VICTORIES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

It was the custom for emperors and Roman consuls, when returning victorious from bitter warfare, to have carried in front of their triumphal chariot the weapons of the princes they had subdued. So also Our Lord Jesus Christ, victorious as He is over His enemies, adorns His Church with the weapons He has taken from them, as with the trophies of His glorious battles. Among these trophies of His victories, one of the principal is without doubt St. Mary Magdalen.

This woman was, as the Church sings, that lost groat which being found was put into the royal treasury: that precious gem which, cleansed from the mire, shone with the splendor of the stars.[1] Let us look more closely at this superb trophy of the victories of the Heart of Jesus. We shall thus learn to know better the

[1] Hymn for Lauds on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen.

power and clemency of this most tender King of our hearts: power, in snatching away from the devil the instrument with which this enemy of mankind designed the ruin of many; clemency, in admitting one who was a public sinner to His most sweet familiarity and secret intimacy. Power and clemency by no means thrown away, since they awakened in St. Mary Magdalen a full and generous response.

Jesus was passing through Galilee, scattering His good tidings like the heavenly Sower that He was, when a Pharisee invited Him to a banquet in his home. With His usual kindness, Jesus accepted the invitation. Hardly had the guests sat down when there came into the dining-hall a woman with burning cheeks, and disheveled hair, showing every sign of the deepest sorrow. She was carrying in her hand a vessel of alabaster full of precious balm. Timidly she makes her way to Jesus, throws herself at His feet, and bursting into tears and sobs, washes these same divine feet with her tears, dries them with her hair, and anoints them with the precious ointment.

But who is this extraordinary woman who in such company is bold enough to display so

great signs of affection, doing what no other had so much as imagined? The holy evangelist says that she was *"a woman that was in the city, a sinner,"* [1] and Holy Church, interpreting the tradition, has pronounced her name. She was Mary Magdalen. Let us admire the clemency of Jesus who with the burning dart of His grace arrests on the path of death, in which she was walking, this wandering soul and brings her back, penitent and purified, among the sheep of His flock.

The Pharisee who had invited Jesus could not refrain from murmuring in his heart: *"This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner."* [2] But Jesus defends the work which His grace is now accomplishing in that soul, hitherto the prey of the devil. In fact, turning to the Pharisee, *"Simon,"* He says, *"I have somewhat to say to thee."—"Master, say it,"* replies the Pharisee.—*"A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both.*

[1] Luke VII, 37. [2] Luke VII, 39.

Which therefore of the two loveth him most?" Simon answers: *"I suppose that he to whom he forgave most."—"Thou hast judged rightly,"* replies Jesus. Then, turning to the woman, He says to Simon the Pharisee: *"Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house: thou gavest me no water for my feet. But she with tears hath washed my feet; and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest me no kiss. But she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint. But she with ointment hath anointed my feet. Wherefore, I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."* Then turning to Mary Magdalen He says: *"Thy sins are forgiven thee."* [1]

But Jesus did not end His beneficent mission toward Mary Magdalen with these words. He was not satisfied with an imperfect victory; even when He was far from her, He continued to guide and sanctify the poor sinner now His devoted servant. He then established between His Sacred Heart and the heart of the penitent a beneficent current of light and grace which raised Mary to the

[1] Luke VII, 40-48.

most sublime communications of divine love. Henceforth, Jesus showers His graces upon her and endows her with celestial gifts, like a sculptor who spends his genius on a shapeless and clumsy rock to produce a statue worthy of his art. Thus, while the emperors and kings of this world do no more, with all the force of their armies, than have their conquered enemies bound and brought before them, the tender King of our hearts can make of His very enemies faithful servants and subjects.

Nor did the munificence of our blessed Lord toward St. Mary Magdalen end here. He even made her, during her very lifetime, the mediator and, as it were, dispenser of His divine favors.

On the death of Lazarus, the beloved brother of Mary Magdalen and Martha, Jesus betakes Himself to Bethany to console the sorrowing sisters and raise His friend to life again. On learning that the Saviour has come, Martha first goes to meet Him; then she says to Him weeping: *"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."* [1] But Jesus seems not moved by Martha's words. Soon after, her

[1] John XI, 21.

sister Magdalen comes weeping bitterly, making the same tender complaint: *"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."* [1] At these words of Magdalen, Jesus is troubled in heart, and weeping goes to the sepulcher. Then with His lifegiving voice He commands death to give back to the sorrowful sisters their beloved brother.

See here the bounty and regal munificence of the divine Heart toward His penitent, but faithful servant. Who would not be moved, seeing Jesus, the King of souls, taking pleasure in bestowing His benefits with such profusion upon the soul of the penitent who had returned to Him?

But just as the fine scenery in pictures is thrown into greater relief by the background, so the grace given by the Heart of Jesus to Magdalen appears greater when she is seen assisting at the agony of her Lord and Master who dies despised on the bitter cross. Mary Magdalen is not afraid to approach the place of execution. As the love which binds her to the divine Heart is as strong as death, she stands by Him as He hangs on the infamous

[1] John XI, 32.

cross bearing upon Himself the maledictions of Heaven and earth.

But Our Saviour has already drawn His last breath; His dead body has been laid in the sepulcher. What will the lover of the Sacred Heart do now? With anxiety she awaits the third day; and before sunrise she runs breathless to the sepulcher. The sight of the empty sepulcher fills her with surprise and sorrow. She stands bathed in tears asking between sobs for her beloved Jesus: *"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher: and we know not where they have laid him."* [1] But Jesus does not wish to keep her long in suspense. He appears to her, as though He were a gardener, and Mary hastens to ask Him: *"Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him: and I will take Him away."* [2]

Jesus then calls her by name, "Mary." Oh, how happy a moment was that for Magdalen! At this sweet and gentle voice she recognized her loving Lord and cast herself at His feet. She wished to kiss those blessed feet, but this was not allowed her, and instead, *"Go,"* says

[1] John XX, 2. [2] John XX, 15.

Jesus, *"to my brethren and say to them: I ascend to my Father and to your Father."* [1] So Jesus, while refusing to gratify a natural impulse in His ardent lover, raises her to an incomparable dignity, entrusting her with an embassy of very great moment, making her, by that mission, the teacher, as it were, of His own apostles and disciples.

But if the love of Magdalen for Our Lord was so vivid while He was still in this world, it was not in any way lessened after her divine Master had departed this life. Now, by what characteristic was this love distinguished? This love became a love of immolation. Mary Magdalen, retiring to a lonely place near Marseilles, consumed herself there in tears of contemplation like a grain of incense in a burning thurible. And, indeed, the fragrance of her virtues went up to Heaven as a cloud of incense most pleasing in the sight of God; for we see to this day that for those who go as pilgrims to that marvelous desert invoking her, she obtains from her heavenly Spouse signal graces. This clearly shows that Jesus makes those who subject themselves to His sweet

[1] John XX, 17.

empire, happy on earth and glorious in heaven.[1]

[1] In this consideration we have followed the more common Tradition according to which the woman who was a sinner is identified with the sister of Martha and Lazarus and with the Magdalen to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection. This sentiment is held by St. Augustine and St. Gregory and consecrated by the Church in the office of St. Mary Magdalen.

CHAPTER XXV

IN WHAT FASHION JESUS CHRIST SHOULD REIGN OVER OUR HEARTS

All who study the marvelous figure of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the light of divine revelations, cannot but be filled with holy enthusiasm by these words of St. Paul: *"For He must reign."* [1] And as faithful armies, at the appearance of kings or captains, welcome these with loud acclamations, so also the Christian who recognizes in Jesus the King of his heart ponders over His qualities, spontaneously prostrates himself in humble adoration, and reverently proclaims His royal dignity. Those very ones who deny and despise the kingdom of Jesus, cannot withdraw themselves from His authority. Beneath His scepter they must bend, however unwillingly, according as David prophesied: *"Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel."* [2]

[1] I Cor. XV, 25. [2] Ps. II, 9.

We certainly do not wish to be numbered among these scornful and ungrateful subjects. We applaud the kingdom of this loving and divine Sovereign and submit to it with the greatest joy. We ardently desire that every one should receive Him, every family should recognize Him, every nation and society should proclaim Him their King and Lord. *"Oportet hunc regnare super nos."*

To understand how Jesus should reign over our persons we must call to mind the words of the divine precept: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind."* [1] These four things Jesus Christ mentions—the mind or intellect, the heart or will, the soul or the passions, and finally, the strength or the powers of the soul.

In the first place our divine Saviour wishes to reign over our minds or intellects, and this by means of faith, which is the noblest homage we can pay to His sovereignty because the intellect is the highest power of man. This faith, if pure and sincere, will beget in us that pure light whence springs the gift which St.

[1] Luke X, 27.

Paul calls: *"the mind of Christ."* [1] It is only when we possess this wonderful "mind of Christ" in its perfection, that Jesus may be said to reign fully over our intellect. In fact, this mind is what impels us to ordain all our doings toward the end prefixed by God, which is the possession of Himself. With this mind we should also judge the things of this world, following in all things the glorious teaching of the Gospel.

Oh, if all the faithful only possessed this priceless gift of the mind of Jesus Christ! We should not then hear Christians insult their holy mother the Church as so many do, or murmur against the justice of God, complaining arrogantly of the providence of their heavenly Father. They would rather see and adore in every occurrence of life the most holy will of God which guides men to their rightful end by ways unknown to men. They would bow their heads under the sufferings which this loving Father sends to chastise and purify their hearts still more; they would make the truths of the Gospels and the teaching of Holy Church the criterion of their lives.

[1] I Cor. II, 16.

Jesus wishes to reign not over our minds only, but over our hearts also, over our wills and all our affections. Marvelous, indeed, is Our Lord's dominion over the will of those who submit and consecrate themselves without reserve to Him. He molds them and governs them according to His most holy wishes, and does with them what no orator with the most eloquent speech, no monarch with arms or treasure, could ever be able to do. Jesus, in a word, gently bends the will submitted to Him, until it loves God and prefers invisible gifts to the transitory goods of this world. He inspires His faithful to shrink from no sacrifice in following up divine grace. He gives them courage to overcome all difficulties and to embrace with generosity those means—however bitter or distasteful to nature—which are most efficacious in bringing about their eternal salvation.

The will that is entirely consecrated to Jesus is habitually raised by Him to great heights of sanctity. But too often it happens that our natural indolence, the fierce temptations of the world and the devil, the misfortunes and tribulations of life, make our will irresolute and

slothful in following up the impulses of grace bestowed on us by our beloved King, Jesus Christ. Let us pray His adorable Heart not to look on our aversions, not to consider our unfaithfulnesses but to keep and strengthen His hold over our hearts and over our wills until they are finally united and merged, as it were, in His most holy will. What happiness, what spiritual joy, shall we not find when our wills shall be fixed in the will of Our Lord. The joys of paradise will become our portion even in this miserable world, because to do the will of God is an ineffable source of joy both to man and angel.

But it is not enough that Jesus should reign over our minds and wills. He must also reign over our souls, that is, over our passions. These passions, being in themselves indifferent, can be turned to good or evil; but they must not *"kick against the goad,"* [1] with which, as in St. Paul's case, Our Lord is wont to prick the rebellious soul. These passions must submit to His orders in conformity to the yoke He lays upon them. They must be as docile steeds under the hand of a skilled rider; other-

[1] Acts IX, 5.

wise if we let them throw off His wise guidance they will carry us hither and thither at their pleasure, threatening to hurl us into the infernal abyss.

May Jesus Christ, then, reign over our love that it may not wander foolishly but may return to God, like a ray of light reflected in a translucent mirror goes back to its origin. May He reign over the passion of hatred that it may only loathe that which is detestable to His most pure eye. May joy and sorrow be the servants of this King; may we never be carried away by a joy which is not His or grieved by a sorrow which does not concern His interests.

When we shall have surrendered to Jesus the complete and absolute government of our passions, He will flood the most intimate fiber of our souls with divine peace and we shall be no longer agitated and made wretched by them. Rather these passions will become a valid means of gaining the kingdom of heaven, which is attained only by violence over oneself and at the price of a struggle generously undergone.

If sometimes these passions rebel and rise

furious as a stormy sea, we should invoke the King of our souls; Jesus will come straightway on the crest of the raging waves, the majestic bearer of peace, and will calm with a word the fury of the tempest.

But in order that nothing may escape the blissful dominion of the Heart of Jesus over us, we must fulfill the fourth condition of the divine precept: *Thou shalt love Me with all thy strength.* This is the last rampart of man on which Jesus must fix His standard. This is the last shred of our personality on which He wishes to outpour the influence of His royal power, and which should obey His fatherly and loving care.

What does the Sacred Heart of Jesus ask of us? He asks that we consecrate our body a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God;[1] that the whole of us should be a throne of pure ivory on which He may sit as sovereign, a monstrance in which He may be glorified in the eyes of the world. He wishes that our physical strength should be directed to those holy enterprises which further His glory, that our limbs should be used in the works of His

[1] Rom. XII, 1.

kingdom and never be contaminated in the self-indulgences and lusts of the body which ought to be the temple of the Holy Ghost.[1] Oh, what a jealous custodian Jesus is of the purity of this His possession! He cannot suffer the stain of impurity and abandons, in His indignation, him who has gravely offended the sanctity of his Christian profession.

Should Our Lord, in His infinite wisdom, have seen fit to take away our bodily health, let us offer Him this deprivation as a sacrifice of love; let us suffer willingly such griefs and afflictions His providence sees fit to send us for our good.

Jesus also with this solemn invitation: *"Thou shalt love Me with all thy strength,"* means that we should direct all our actions to Him, as the Apostle admonishes us: *"Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God."*[2] If we are careful to perform every action for Jesus we shall not run after vain glory and ambition like worldlings who sacrifice to these idols all the strength of their souls and bodies, without any

[1] I Cor. VI, 19. [2] I Cor. X, 31.

lasting profit even in this life, where fortunes vary like leaves in the wind.

If we really desire to present ourselves before the tribunal of this our loving King and Sovereign with days full of good works, we should from this moment consecrate to Him all our senses, thoughts and actions. Our eyes we should consecrate to Him, bewailing with bitter tears our ingratitude and the days lost away from Him. Our ears we should direct to His service, showing ourselves desirous of hearing the divine word and fleeing the deceitful promises of a fallacious age. The tongue, too, powerful weapon of good and evil and the principal instrument of our minds, whence issue either words of edification or poisoned darts of hatred or deceit, must serve Our Lord Jesus Christ. It must govern itself in such a fashion that its sayings proceed from wisdom, worthy of a true Christian. To Jesus, Our King, it must pour forth songs of praise and thanksgiving, so becoming the interpreter of that senseless universe which for us was created. Hands and feet, also, must busy themselves in glorifying, praising and serving

this King of love. For His sake our hands must weary themselves in the service of His poor; our feet must walk only in the ways of justice and go but where He calls. Our knees must adore Him as God and Sovereign, bowing down before the Sacrament of His love and the image of His martyrdom.

St. Francis de Sales has a beautiful passage on this subject. *"Bees,"* he says, *"are never at peace until they have found their king. They never stop flying through the air scattering hither and thither, hardly ever in their hive. But as soon as their king is born they all surround him and never leave him except for their harvest and by his command. So our intellect, will, passions and powers of the soul, like spiritual bees, as long as they have no king, that is, as long as they have not chosen Our Lord for their king, have no rest. Our senses do not cease to stray about curiously, dragging our interior powers after them to waste them on one object or another. . . . But the instant that our soul has elected Our Lord as its only King and Sovereign, these powers speedily calm down and standing round Him never quit their hive except upon*

some work of charity which this holy King commands them to exercise towards their neighbor." [1]

Oh, how fair and joyful a spectacle, to see our whole being with all its powers, with all its limbs, proclaim each in its own fashion Jesus Christ as its King and Sovereign and serve Him only: indeed, *"He must reign."* [2]

[1] Treatise X. On Modesty.
[2] I Cor. XV, 25.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW JESUS CHRIST MUST REIGN OVER THE HOUSEHOLD

We have already considered how Jesus should reign over each individual of the great human society, commanding men's minds and hearts, their souls and their strength. Let us now see how He should reign over the household according to the ardent wish He expressed when He promised to bless those families in which the image of His Most Sacred Heart would be made the object of especial veneration.

But, first of all, let us turn to those wretched households over which Jesus is not allowed to reign. These are made up of those people who lower and obscure the holiness of married life, making it neither more nor less than a simple contract. In such households Jesus will not and cannot reign. And as He cannot reign, who else will command there save His enemy, Satan?

God's object in instituting the marriage bond was to furnish citizens for the kingdom of heaven. Thus married people coöperate with Him in fulfilling the number of the elect. It is evident, then, that the matrimonial union can be ruled by none but Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has purchased our eternal happiness. The moment married people withdraw from the dominion of this King of love, what can they expect but dissensions, ill-feeling and misfortunes which not infrequently make life for them an insupportable burden?

On the other hand, fortunate indeed is the truly Christian household, whose heads do not act except moved from the holiest motives and propose to themselves, as the rule of their lives, not the pleasures of the senses but the law of God. This upright intention will surely lead them and their offspring on the road to eternal happiness. To such couples Our Lord gives, with His blessing, abundant graces, so that they may live in perfect concord, and rear up in a Christian way the children who come to bring joy to the household.

It is not enough that married people should

take Jesus Christ as their King at the beginning of their wedded life. This loving Sovereign also wishes to continue reigning over them through a mutual and sincere charity founded on His holy love. For He is the King of charity and Prince of peace, and therefore He flees from those households where strife, evil speech and bad behavior are the rule, where the husband ill-treats the wife and the wife does not respect the husband; where children influenced by the bad example of their parents go so far as to insult them.

Jesus cannot and will not reign over such families as do not persevere in His holy love. He wishes that charity should unite with her sweet bond the hearts of parents and children; that she should govern the speech of all; that she should suggest loving accents to the parents and reverential replies to the children; that she should direct the work of each member of the household under the wise influence of its head; that she should take her place by the fireside so that every stranger crossing the threshold of such a household as this, would say what was said of the first Christians in the

Acts of the Apostles that *"they had but one heart and one soul."* [1]

How happy are those households in which the father teaches the way of virtue by his example, and the mother, full of Christian wisdom, educates the children at the school of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This King of love, from His heavenly throne, will pour down streams of grace and blessing over the members of such a household. If, by some mischance, any of the children, carried away by the deceitful current of life, should go astray from the right path, it will not be difficult for him to come back if only he bring back his thoughts to the sweet nest of his childhood, as to the place where he learned to know the unspeakable goodness of Jesus. Such a recollection as this, aided by divine grace, will no doubt lead him back again to God; marking as it were the first stage of his complete reformation.

Now, then, if married people wish Jesus to reign over their households, it is necessary that they should have a right and Christian idea of the holiness of marriage and that their hearts

[1] Acts IV, 32.

should be made one by the presence of divine charity. This godly virtue will level, so to speak, those differences of character and opinion which might otherwise become sources of perpetual bitterness.

But what will be the outward sign by which such a happy family will be distinguished from those unhappy households which are so luckless as to shrink from the sweet dominion of our King, Jesus Christ? What, if not that sign pointed out by Himself when he said: *"I will bless those households in which the image of My Heart is exposed and honored?"* Let, then, the image of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord be erected in the most honorable and conspicuous place of each Christian dwelling, so that from the Divine Heart of Jesus the heavenly blessing may irradiate over the whole house.

Around this image of Our Lord the whole family should gather at the hour of prayer. To Him should be raised the grave voice of the father and the sweet tones of the mother, re-echoed by the silvery notes of the children, all praying God to bless the opening day or to drive away temptations and misfortunes from

the somber night. Jesus will look down with a smile of complacency on these earnest and loyal subjects of His; He will generously recompense the reverent and loving homage of a household which thus consecrates itself to Him. Such a household cannot but be fortunate, if not in the good things of the world, at least in charity and peace which are incomparable possessions more precious than gold or silver.

But Christian parents who wish to please Our Lord in all things must add work to their prayers; work such as was sanctified in the humble workshop at Nazareth. The law of work is after all a divine law, and the King of the Christian household wishes it to be graven on the minds and hearts of parents: *"Ora et labora."* As a bird is born to fly, so man is born to labor.[1] Noblest of all is the work of the intellect; but not without praise and value is material work also, when to it is added that uplifting of mind and heart which not only brings delight among our wearinesses, but is also like a ray of sunshine to dissipate the clouds and cheer our hearts. Sweet indeed and noble is work done for the love and under

[1] Job, V, 7.

the eyes of our gentle Sovereign, Jesus, who has sanctified our toils with His sweat, and raised them to the dignity of meriting life eternal!

See how the Sacred Heart of Jesus should reign over the household, and how from it, as from the purest of fountains, Christian parents should draw that peace and contentment which neither the riches nor the pleasures of this world can bestow.

CHAPTER XXVII

HOW JESUS CHRIST MUST REIGN OVER SOCIETY

We have seen how Jesus Christ Our Lord should reign over individuals as well as over households. However, this is not all: He must reign also over society at large, for the Father has promised to give him *"the nations for His inheritance."* [1] These, in fact, are the words which the prophet David, when raised on the wings of contemplation even unto the counsels of the Holy Trinity, heard proffered by the eternal Father to the Divine Word made man.

Jesus Christ was therefore constituted and proclaimed King of the Universe by the Father. But if He is a King, regal honors are due to Him; and hence Holy Church desires all Christian nations to offer Him those signs of public honor and worship which befit the King of kings and Lord of lords.

In these last unfortunate years the devil, the

[1] Ps. II, 8.

sworn adversary of the reign of Jesus over souls, has sought more than ever to banish this Divine King from society. By means of his evil followers, he strives to bring back the world to paganism or at least to naturalism, inspiring men with the spirit of revolt: *"We will not have this man to reign over us."* [1] But we Christians, who love the reign of this Divine Sovereign and desire to extend it still further, will answer His adversaries with one voice: *"We will have God for our Father, we will have God for our King."*

It may be asked what sort of honor should be given to Jesus Christ by society. We answer briefly: we should first honor Him in his holy cross; and secondly in public prayer and adoration.

The cross is the glorious banner of our King, Jesus Christ.[2] It should be raised everywhere, because everywhere there are souls subject to Him. As we desire that society should return under the scepter of Our Redeemer, so also do we wish to see this adorable sign everywhere surrounded by love, respect and veneration.

[1] Luke XIX, 14.

[2] It is called thus in the liturgy of the Church. Hymn at Vespers on Passion Sunday.

We wish to see it on the crowns of Kings and Princes, because even royal heads must bow to Jesus; on the façades of Houses of Parliament and Town Halls, so that the most vital interests of the nation may be seen by all to be placed under the protection of that holy symbol under which alone flourish justice and peace. We wish, too, that the cross should be erected in cemeteries, so that it may stretch its loving arms over the bowers of our dear ones. We wish to see it tower on the glittering summits of mountains, as a sign that Jesus rules over the whole world.

This sacred emblem is a profession of our faith and a protest against that lack of supernatural belief which threatens to corrupt the whole of society. With the spread of Christianity, this symbol of peace, love and sacrifice was erected everywhere: our forefathers who grasped its marvelous power and sublime significance wished every public monument to be adorned with it. But now an infernal tempest has arisen which well nigh is driving it out of modern society. Oh, let this holy symbol be put up again, not only on the altars of our churches, as a pledge of the bloodless Sacrifice

which is unceasingly offered, but also on the arches of palaces, to recall the great of this world to virtue, and on the humble cottages of the poor, to teach them patience and resignation.[1]

To Jesus, King of society, the homage of public praise and worship should also be offered. For it is not enough that individual Christians should raise their minds to the adorable Sovereign of our hearts in their homes or in church only. It is needful moreover that the whole of society, led by its representatives, should bow before Him, and recognize Him as supremely their King and Sovereign. A prayer should be raised to our divine Lord before every social act that He may deign to protect and bless the whole nation and whatsoever is done to promote its welfare.

It is not enough that men should be Christians in their private life only. Members of

[1] Herein falls an opportunity of mentioning the Confraternity of the Most Holy Cross, founded in the Middle Ages under the influence of that apostle of Jesus crucified, St. Philip Benizi. This Confraternity has produced signal fruits of sanctification in the course of ages. It is desirable that it should spread throughout the world to hasten the social reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Parliament, heads of Municipalities, the ruler of the nation, must be Christians too, and openly so. For cities, counties and nations are all subject to the jurisdiction of Jesus Christ who has received power to its fullest extent from His divine Father. This power He possesses in all its manifestations, the power to rule and govern; the power to legislate and the power to judge.[1]

In the first place those appointed to rule over cities or nations should put themselves under the guidance of Jesus Christ in all that concerns their office of governing others. They should order their actions so as to fulfill their obligations according to the maxims of the Gospel. If this is done, Jesus will reign effectively in Christian society. The Gospel, with that light of heavenly wisdom which irradiates its every page, should guide the leaders of this world. From that inspired book they will learn that the end to which society is destined is none other than eternal happiness, in pursuance of that great maxim: *"Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you."* [2]

[1] Matth. XXVIII, 18. [2] Matth. VI, 33.

Accordingly, the heads of society will behave themselves in all that concerns their offices as good and convinced Christians, seeking not only natural happiness, but above all that which is supernatural. Thus shall they make their people happy even in this life, for it is a law of God that grace does not destroy, but perfects, nature. There are eloquent proofs of this in those countries which are informed by Christian faith and enjoy not only the life of the soul but that of material prosperity as well. And who would not call that people blessed whose ruler, brought up in the school of Jesus Christ, governs his subjects in the spirit of meekness, charity and justice?

Those in power not only must derive inspiration from the rules laid down by Jesus Christ, but they must also see that the laws enacted for the good of society are derived from the commandments of God and the Church; of which there should to-day be a more open and detailed expression.

Nothing should be more sacred and august in a society than the laws by which it is governed. These laws bringing into harmony the

mutual rights and duties of all members of the state, help to maintain that balance and right order which guards the liberty and assures the well-being of individuals and the nation. Now legislators must establish justice through Jesus,[1] and so it is natural that the power of enacting laws should fall under the divine authority of this amiable King and be based on the maxims of the Gospel.

Human laws if based on this immovable foundation, will become a pledge of happiness, a shield against foes, a ladder which leads safely to Heaven. A proof of this are those nations which flourished and prospered in the Middle Ages, under the guidance of an entirely Christian legislation drawn up in accordance with the maxims of the Gospel. On the other hand, what is more fickle, what is more inadequate, than a legislation which has no other basis than the will or caprice of men? For, just as man's will is undependable and his aspirations are changeable, so laws of such a nature are made and unmade with equal facility. While they pretend, though even

[1] Prov. VIII, 15.

here they cannot succeed, to provide everything for this life, they end by being execrated by men who see themselves bitterly deluded in their aspirations.

To Jesus also, as King of human society, belongs the power to judge; that power, namely, which He displays in rewarding the good and punishing the evil. This power, properly speaking, belongs to God as supreme Lord and first Principle of all beings: but this same power the Father has delegated to Jesus Christ making Him, according to His Humanity, Judge of the living and the dead.[1]

Now for judging rightly, three things are required:—first, wisdom, which is the soul and form of judgment, for the judge should be as it were a living justice; secondly, zeal for what is right, so that he judge not for hate or envy, but for very love of justice; thirdly, the power of rewarding the good and punishing the wicked. Now Jesus Christ, as Man, first, is full of grace and truth; besides, in Him all is holiness and righteousness and justice; finally, to Him was given all power in heaven and on earth.[2]

[1] Acts X, 42. [2] Matth. XXVIII, 18.

Nor of the judicial power of Jesus Christ can it be said (what is sometimes said of human justice) that it is terrifying to the poor and scorned by the rich. For the power of our divine Judge and Sovereign stretches equally over the whole universe, over men of every age and nation, and even over the angels. Over all men Jesus is appointed Judge because all are directed to eternal bliss and it is in His power to admit or reject them: over the angels, because they also receive through Him either an increase of glory or an accidental penalty.

From this we realize how misguided are they who fear more the false and vain criticism of this perverse world than the terrible judgments of our supreme Judge. At the lightning of His angry countenance, when the fatal sentence will be passed, they will realize, but too late, how baneful was their cowardice in refusing to follow the wise maxims of the Gospel, in not fearing and loving this just Judge, in not having recourse to Him to obtain mercy and pardon before the terrible day of the great account came to pass.

"*Juste Judex ultionis,*	"Who just Judge of vengeance art,
Donum fac remissionis	Thy forgiveness now impart,
Ante diem rationis." [1]	Ere the accepted day depart."

Jesus Christ is therefore the Supreme King, Sovereign Lord of all societies; and as those who stand at the helm of nations have received power from Him to govern the people, to issue laws and to render justice; so there is no true authority or ruling power, legislative or judicial, which is not upheld and inspired by that of Jesus Christ.

It is useful to recall this truth in these our times when modern free-thought has made every effort to blot out this teaching, divesting princes of that halo which is a reflection of divine majesty;[2] and seeing in the origin, transmission and exercise of civil authority nothing but a simple expression of the will of

[1] Sequence in the Mass of the Dead.

[2] In view of the grave errors which have arisen on the origin, nature and exercise of civil authority, it is well to be reminded of the celebrated Encyclical of Leo XIII: *Diuturnum illud* of June 29, 1881, in which this illustrious Pontiff establishes, against what some modern authors hold, the great principle that the right of governing, even in rulers popularly elected, is bestowed directly by God to whom belongs supreme and universal dominion: "*Quo sane delectu* (candidatorum) *designantur principes, non conferuntur iura principatus.*"

the people. But not for all this has the King of kings, the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ, laid down the power which He received from the Father over the nations of the earth: and the words of St. Paul remain forever: *"In the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth."* [1]

A striking instance of how the saints conceived the right of Jesus Christ to reign over society and over all nations is had in the beautiful episode that took place at the court of the king of France in the year 1429 shortly before the Maid of Orleans, Joan of Arc, saved that country from alien dominion and led Charles to Rheims, there to be solemnly crowned.

"Gentle Dauphin," she asked him one day, in presence of the lords of the realm and of the nations, "will you promise to grant me what I shall ask you?" The king at first hesitated, but at last answered: "Certainly, Joan, ask me what you will."—"Gentle Dauphin," she then said, "I ask you to give me your kingdom."

The king, stupefied at such a request, for a

[1] Phil. II, 10.

time remained silent. At last, however, bound by his promise and conquered by the supernatural charm of Joan, he took his resolve: "Joan," he said, "I give you my kingdom."

But the Maid was not satisfied with these words, though uttered in the presence of many witnesses. She requested that a solemn act should be drawn up and signed by four royal notaries. This done, she looked at the king with a pitiful smile, saying: "There is the poorest of all the knights of France. I pity him."

Being now herself sovereign and mistress of France, she did not stop here. Turning to the secretaries, "Write," she said, "'Joan gives the kingdom to Jesus Christ.'" And soon after: "Write again: 'Jesus gives the kingdom back to Charles.'" [1]

Herein surely lies a great lesson. It implies that the kings of this world are but tributaries of Christ and it is their duty to give over to Him the scepter which they received either from their ancestors or by the election of the people. They should consider them-

[1] This particular detail of the life of Joan of Arc is historically founded on the deposition of the Duke of Alençon in the "Procès" III, 19. See L. Delisle. *Nouveau tèmoignage relatif à la Mission de Jeanne d'Arc.*

selves as but the lieutenants of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. "They have called the people happy, that hath (the goods of this world): but happy is (only) that people whose God is the Lord." [1]

[1] Ps. CXLIII, 15.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOW JESUS CHRIST, KING OF OUR HEARTS, TRIUMPHS OVER HIS ENEMIES

THE government of society belongs of right to Jesus Christ, who guides all nations in the path of virtue. He dictates laws which make men happy in time and in eternity. He judges every one and has the power of life and death over every member of the great human family. To Him, therefore, glory should be given by all the rulers of the earth, who depend on Him in the execution of their power and, therefore, must bow their knees to Him as to their Lord and Master. But as this same loving Saviour has heaped benefits on the whole human race, ransoming it from sin, relieving its misery and bringing help and comfort to all, it follows that all owe Him veneration, homage and love.

But although Jesus Christ, Our Lord, has enriched mankind so generously, yet, if we look round the world, we only see, on the part of

most men, icy indifference to Him and a black ingratitude for His gifts. Nor is this mere indifference and ingratitude. I should say rather—terrible as it is to have to say it—aversion and hatred.

The question before us is: how does it come that this very love of Jesus for us is made an object of hatred? We can only say that it is a fact. So blinded with rage are the enemies of Jesus Christ that they persecute and wage mortal war not only on Him, but on all who belong to Him as well. And so is verified—even as regards the wicked—the fact that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the Center of all hearts: *"Cor Jesu, Centrum omnium cordium."* But in the case of the wicked, the Heart of Jesus becomes a center of attack, the target of their poisoned arrows. How deep and terrible is this mystery of ingratitude, which makes the whole earth an object of just wrath to a God infinitely good and infinitely holy, who sees all His mercy belittled, outraged and despised.

Yet so marvelous is the power of Our Redeemer that even His sworn enemies are compelled, at times, reluctant as they may be, to burst forth in words of praise in His honor and

to recognize His supremacy over all mankind. Just as Balaam, the idolatrous prophet, called upon by Balaac, King of Moab, to curse the Hebrew nation, found himself compelled to bless them instead, foretelling them their prosperity and triumph; so even the most violent blasphemers of Jesus Christ are sometimes heard enthusiastically to celebrate His greatness and His victories. So, but a short time ago, we saw the civilized world, with its many associations of men, some even openly hostile to Christ and His Church, uniting in one voice of joy and exultation to celebrate the event of the liberation from the Moslem yoke of the Holy Places sanctified once by the presence of Our Saviour. So true are the words of St. Paul: *"At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow."* [1]

Whosoever thoroughly considers the warfare waged against our divine Redeemer, clearly sees that His enemies are divided into three distinct classes, each of them, unfortunately, only too numerous. The first are those sworn enemies of His who fight undisguisedly, whether by speech, writing, or deed, to the end

[1] Phil. II, 10.

of frustrating or overthrowing His kingdom.

The second is that still more numerous category of the indifferent. People who know nothing, or pretend to know nothing about God, who dwell in this world without seeking or asking whence they came or whither they go, interested only in material things in which they put all their trust. These do not love the divine King of our hearts, because they do not know Him. How many pass by our churches without even setting foot on the threshold, ignoring the great Treasure which is contained within. "O Jesus," exclaimed St. Aloysius Gonzaga, "Thou art not loved because Thou art not known."

The third class, and this is even greater than the second, is made up of lax Christians. Here there is no question of hostility to the Name of Christ or of denying it. But in practice this class ranges itself with Our Lord's enemies, because its deeds, its behavior, is nothing else but an implicit denial of His kingdom, a mute but real rebellion against His holy laws. And not only are these Christians disobedient to the laws of Jesus Christ, but they also give His enemies an occasion to deride His Holy Name.

They call themselves Christians and yet they are not ashamed to stain their lives with innumerable vices, which the popular opinion, wrongly, yet with some show of right, attributes to the religion they profess. Alas, how many Christians, even persons consecrated by sacred ties to God, cause the Holy Name of Our Lord to be thus blasphemed!

But if a king has enemies who give themselves to insulting and offending him, his subjects who are faithful and devoted are not content with bewailing the ingratitude of the rebellious. They try to make up, by an ardent affection, which they manifest in word and deed, for the injuries done to their sovereign. They show him a greater respect than ever, and display a still more lively zeal for his honor. By this they make amends, so far as they can, for the black ingratitude of those who are not ashamed to deny Our Lord his due tribute of love and veneration.

We, therefore, who rightly boast of belonging to the free subjects of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our celestial Sovereign, must see that our lives correspond to our dignity. And especially we must make up for the love denied

Him by His enemies and counterpoise the hatred with which He is repaid by offering Him our hearts enkindled with imperishable and burning love. We should offer Him praises in place of the blasphemies by which He is surrounded; adoration and homage to make amends for the refusal of many to acknowledge Him as King and Sovereign of all hearts. If others ignore Him, let us seek His glory everywhere, with the ardor of apostles, endeavoring to make known His divine Heart by all, for in so far as Jesus Christ is known, so also will He be loved.

Especially let us try to make this Sacred Heart of Our Saviour loved by little children, before the pestilential breath of the world has withered their minds and souls. We should remember that it is easier to kindle this flame of love for Jesus Christ in the innocent hearts of these His little ones than in grown-up people, who being the slaves of their passions, often have nothing for Him but indifference and coldness.

But we can much more efficaciously make up to our loving Sovereign for the offenses He receives, by the force of our good example. We

should strive with all our strength to make our lives mirror the most holy life of Jesus, so that in us the saying may be verified: *"A Christian is another Christ."* Oh, could we also be as St. Paul says, *"the good odor of Christ unto God"!*[1] Who knows how many rebellious subjects, attracted by our example, would then turn to the loving King of our hearts, and become, once again, His generous and faithful subjects? But even if this does not come to pass, at least we shall be sure that by leading a life worthy of our Divine Sovereign we shall not, at the last day, be scorned by Him and cast away from His presence as unworthy subjects, too unlike their Master.

Therefore, let us seek by every means in our power that these words of St. Paul may be verified: *"He must reign, until he hath put all his enemies under his feet."*[2] Yes, it is meet that the decrees of God should be fulfilled. God wishes that Jesus Christ should reign and govern the world, that He should conquer His enemies and make His subjects free. The day will come when all the enemies of Jesus will be subjected to Him and no adversary will be left

[1] II Cor. II, 15. [2] I Cor. XV, 25.

to fight. Then His kingdom will be all peace, all harmony. But until that day comes to pass, He will always be surrounded by enemies; for it is necessary that His power should first be displayed in the greatness and splendor of His triumphs.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOW JESUS CHRIST TRIUMPHS OVER THE ENEMIES OF HIS WORKS

Not only is the sacred Person of Jesus Christ made an object of contradiction by an innumerable multitude of enemies all united in refusing to acknowledge Him as their King, but He is also persecuted in His works and in the gifts He has brought us through His incarnation.

Our loving Redeemer came to save mankind, and to that end suffered unheard-of torments. As a remedy for our ills and as a comfort to us in our pilgrimage, He instituted the holy sacraments which are so many participations of His sorrowful passion, precious channels through which grace flows abundantly to our souls. But how are these received? These very benefits which should soften the heart of every man, and make him burst forth into words of vivid gratitude, are received with scorn, even with hatred. The saving institu-

tions of Jesus, His holy sacraments, are by many unconsidered. Just as Lucifer in the beginning pretended to arrive at eternal bliss without the supernatural means ordained and willed by God, so the enemies of Christ presume to reach their desired goal, eternal happiness, without having recourse to the sacraments of the Church, which they proudly reject.

These impious detractors of the sacraments had forerunners worthy of them even in Our Saviour's own lifetime. The Holy Gospel tells us that when Jesus was staying at Capharnaum and spoke of the marvelous institution of the Blessed Sacrament in which He promised to give His flesh as food and His most precious blood as drink, not a few of His disciples were scandalized, and far from thanking Him for such condescension, withdrew from Him, murmuring scornfully: *"This saying is hard and who can hear it?"* [1]

The example of these scornful men was only too closely followed in the course of the ages. How many Christians are there, who, setting aside the gifts of Jesus Christ on futile pre-

[1] John VI, 61.

texts, refuse to wash away their guilt in penance or to refresh their souls at the divine table where He has given Himself in the august Sacrament of the Altar!

The height of ingratitude was reached when this proud scorn of the sacraments of Jesus came to be erected into a system with Luther and the Protestants of the sixteenth century. These innovators, while pretending to admit the divinity of Jesus Christ and to recognize the truth of His Gospel, rejected His work for salvation, refusing to make use of those supernatural means instituted by Him to procure and increase divine grace in the hearts of the redeemed.

Who can say what pain these haughty refusals caused the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This loving Saviour, in order to enrich us with these life-giving sacraments, did not hesitate to suffer a bitter passion and the most cruel of deaths; and yet His children spurned them as useless: *"I have brought up children and exalted them and they have despised me."* [1]

It is for us to see that the saving work of the Sacred Heart of Jesus triumphs. At this

[1] Isa. I, 2.

tender and sorrowful lament let us rouse ourselves and promise that we will make better use of these marvelous instruments of grace, and especially of the most important of them which is the Blessed Eucharist. We will seek to console Jesus for the apostasy and ingratitude of so many of His degenerate sons who abandon themselves to perverse doctrines and go about despising these sacraments as purely human institutions. We will firmly believe that from these, as from beneficent channels, life and grace come our way.

In all ages, perverse men, inspired by the spirit of the devil, have sought to contradict, deliberately, the sanctifying work of Jesus Christ in the priesthood and in the sacraments of the Church. Such attempts were made periodically and now we see them renewed in the activities of many and especially of those who give themselves up to the occult practices of spiritism.

These people, while admitting the existence of a man called Jesus Christ, powerful in word and works, and even, as they would admit, a great benefactor of the human race, reject all priestly ministrations which they say are only

accretions to His work, pure inventions of the Church. They are urged to such conclusions as these by the enemy of mankind himself, who is the spirit of error, lying and deceit. But would to God that those Christians might be fewer who, carried away by their passions, agree with these vilifiers of the faith in setting aside and ignoring such signal channels of divine grace as are the holy sacraments and especially the most august of all, the Blessed Eucharist. Many are those who pass before churches and never enter to adore that same Jesus who is hidden there for us, under the sacramental species, day and night. They do not even reflect on the heavenly Treasure which our churches contain, and seem not to believe that the Manna of supernatural life is inclosed in the holy tabernacle.

Indeed, many pass through life without ever tasting the Heavenly Bread, which Jesus wished to be broken for them at His table. Many, also, passing before the tribunal of penance, though their consciences are weighed down by the burden of an impure life, do not condescend to approach it, refusing to confide the humble accusation of their faults to the

ministers of the Church. Could there be greater oblivion of God's gifts or blacker ingratitude than this? Jesus offers the most precious gifts to man, and man refuses them, nay, he flees and abhors them.

What are we to do? Shall we be satisfied with looking on supinely at such indifference? No; if we have any sense at all of Jesus Christ, we shall fall on our knees before Him and seek to console Him for so much coldness. And how shall we console Him? By frequenting those fountains of grace more often, and drinking longer draughts of those pure streams which His love has opened for us. We shall draw from them a greater purity of life, a spirit of sacrifice and mortification, an ever-increasing desire of pleasing Him. We shall sit frequently at the Heavenly Banquet spread for our souls. Not content with partaking of the fruits of His works ourselves, we will try to lead to Him all those who are near to us either as relatives or friends. Thus in them, too, the beneficent work of the Redeemer will be accomplished; and He will reign as a beloved Sovereign over the hearts of men redeemed by His precious blood.

CHAPTER XXX

HOW JESUS CHRIST MUST TRIUMPH IN HIS MINISTERS

As Jesus Christ is the gentlest, meekest and kindest of Kings, it seems as though He should have no enemies at all. But He has in reality many and powerful adversaries who savagely attack not only His sacred Person and His health-giving institutions, as has been seen already, but also hurl themselves against the ministers bidden by Him to carry on His beneficent mission.

As long as He lived on earth, Jesus had it at heart to protect His beloved disciples against the persecutions and outrages of the Jews. While we see that He Himself kept silence under the inuendoes or calumnies of His enemies, He was immediately fired with holy wrath if evil tongues sharpened themselves against His beloved disciples. At the beginning of His bitter passion, when His brutal captors seized Him and bound Him with ropes and chains in order to lead Him to the tribunal of Annas, He—forgetful of Himself—was not oblivious of His dear friends; but

turning to His torturers, commanded them to let those go in peace and not dare to touch His beloved ones.[1] The hour of the power of darkness had then arrived and the Pharisees thought this a fit occasion to display their hatred against the disciples of the Nazarene also. But He, like a hen who gathers her chickens under her wings, stayed bravely and bore alone the ferocity of the hawk. So was Jesus anxious to protect His little flock from the fury of His sworn enemies. And why did He do this? Because He knew the feebleness of His disciples; and He was well aware how great was their natural weakness and inconstancy, notwithstanding their protestations of attachment and love for Him. Therefore, He did not permit that they should have to undergo any struggle on His account, before they should have been fortified and confirmed in faith and holy charity by the Holy Ghost Himself.

But after the apostles were invested with virtue from on High, Jesus Christ, like an emperor who sends armed and trained troops to the battle-field, commanded them to issue forth

[1] John XVIII, 8.

from the supper room and expose themselves to all sorts of persecution in fulfilling the exalted mission entrusted to them. And the warfare soon began. For there straightway arose against the new champions of the Gospel a terrible persecution, and the Church was empurpled with the disciples' blood. Stephen, in the East, was the first who opened the way for an innumerable multitude of valiant martyrs, who sealed the faith of Jesus Christ with their blood. In the West, the Gentiles, converted to the faith of the Saviour, were quick to consecrate with the martyrdom of thirty-eight heroes (called the martyrs of Nepi) their alliance with this King of love.

But nascent Christianity had to suffer yet more cruel trials from the efforts of the devil. Hardly was faith in the Nazarene propagated in the world than the Church was made the butt of persecution on all hands. Jews, moved by envy, sought to arrest its progress by malicious designs, while the pagans, seeing their idols shattered by the virtue of the holy cross, strove to suffocate the faith in blood. And thenceforth what was the life of the Church throughout the ages but an alternation of blood-

thirsty attacks on the part of her enemies and splendid victories won by her disciples?

Among the attacks which came from paganism, the first were the inhuman persecutions engineered, with every subtle and violent means, by the Roman Emperors, who, enraged against the name of Christian, thought to exterminate the believers in Jesus Christ by the sword. Above all, the holy soil of the Eternal City became the scene of innumerable martyrdoms, after it had been consecrated by the blood of the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, and by that of the Doctor of the Gentiles, St. Paul.—"Happy and blessed is the city of Rome," exclaims St. John Chrysostom. "Not indeed for gold or for columns of marble, not for empire over the whole universe, not for statues and images of heroes, but because it possesses the bodies of those two luminaries of the Church, who for her are like two bright eyes, more resplendent than the midday sun." [1]

No sooner had our divine Saviour returned to His Father than His disciples, and in particular His ministers, priests and pontiffs, were made targets of the bitterest hatred. To take

[1] In Epist. ad Rom. Serm. XXXII in Moral. Exhort.

them prisoner and put them to death became the principal occupation of the rulers of the world. It seemed as though the devil, finding himself unable any longer to wreak his infernal hatred on Jesus, leveled it at all those who continued His work on earth. But our meek Lord had forewarned them of this when He said: *"If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you."* [1]—*"The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his Lord."* [2] And so Jesus Christ comes to be persecuted, not in Himself and His works only, but also in the ministers He sends to accomplish His mission of salvation, life and peace.

But are the ministers of Jesus Christ hated by the pagan world only? No, indeed. For there have never been ages or countries in which heretics and bad Christians have not vented their fury on the Church. Even in this time of advanced civilization, persecution rages, meekly perhaps, but none the less cruel and ferocious. While a daily press throws mud at Our Lord's servants with a liberal hand, an atheistical and immoral literature points them out as enemies of patriotism and progress.

[1] John XV, 18. [2] Matth. X, 24.

Every imaginable false and evil charge is accumulated against their ministry. Some Governments, inspired by a malicious sect, treat them as sworn enemies of law and order.

What Christian heart would not weep bitter tears in seeing the august Vicar of Jesus Christ made the butt of contradiction, jeers, scorn and hatred? Oh, how well does the sad lament of Dante fit this time of ours: *"I see in His Vicar Christ made captive: a second time I see Him mocked, I see the vinegar and the gall renewed and Him slain between living thieves."* [1]

Besides the subtle and satanic onslaught waged against the ministers of Jesus Christ, we must not omit to make mention of those persecutions of which we have had recent examples in the case of the martyrs of Annam and Thibet, and of those who succumbed during the French Revolution. In times nearer our own, we have seen the ill-treatment inflicted on the Christians in Ouganda and on the clergy in Paris during the Commune; in Portugal and Spain during the recent upheaval, in Turkey, and even now in Mexico.

[1] Purgatorio XX, 87-91. Trans. by Thomas Okey.

It seems as though the earth, having drunk up the blood of God made Man on Golgotha, still thirsts for more; and as it can no longer drink that divine blood, it seeks to quaff the blood of His followers, more especially His faithful ministers.

But if we see Jesus so combated and contradicted in His servants, would our love for Him inspire us to do nothing? Would we look on indifferently and apathetically at the persecutions leveled against those who represent Him on earth, whom He loves with special benevolence, whom He has made the pastors of His flock? No; such a spectacle cannot leave us indifferent. Mindful that the injuries which Jesus receives in His ministers, are not less bitter to His heart than those directed against His work and against His Holy Person, we shall seek to make honorable amends to His Heart, pierced as it is by the cruel persecutions His servants undergo.

Therefore, let us seek generously and with all the force of our souls to welcome with docile minds and affectionate hearts the laws and wishes of the Vicar of Christ, the Roman Pontiff. Let us not fail to honor Our Saviour's

ministers, in word and deed, for they represent His most sacred Person for us. Let us not allow anybody depending on us to despise the clergy or show them anything but befitting respect.

Jesus, our sweet Saviour, we promise to venerate Thee in Thy ministers, not less than in Thy saving works and in Thy lovable Person. We promise to comport ourselves as Thy faithful subjects, adorable Sovereign of our Hearts, always showing a profound respect for the authority of Thy Vicar on earth, a perfect submission of mind and will to his commands, a generosity of heart in furnishing the necessities of Thy ministers and in cooperating with them in the great work of the sanctification of souls. Then we may hope, when we quit this world, to hear the consoling invitation: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."* [1]

[1] Matth. XXV, 21.

CONCLUSION

SWEET and consoling indeed it is to speak of Jesus. In contemplating this loving King of our hearts, crowned by His Heavenly Father with glory and honor, our eyes enjoy a celestial vision. And now the lips of this our Sovereign open with a pressing invitation accompanied by solemn and magnificent promises. These promises are made by One who is our King by nature and by right of conquest, by One to whom all creation is subject, to whom the powers and dominations bow. O marvelous condescension! This glorious King invites us to march under His banner, to serve Him with all our powers and to follow Him with all the affections of our hearts.

O Jesus, O sweet Redeemer, we wish to respond generously to Thy appeal. Henceforth we will acknowledge and proclaim Thee as our supreme King and Sovereign. Reign over us, over our hearts, our households, our country, over all society. This we wish, and this we

beseech of Thee. This is our choice and our most ardent prayer. Henceforth our one thought will be to serve and to please Thee till our last breath. Neither the shrinking of the senses nor the weakness of our corrupt nature nor even our enemies' swords will make us change our purpose. And to begin here and now, behold, O Lord, at Thy feet, our own persons and all our goods. We put ourselves at Thy service, we consecrate ourselves to Thee, that Thou mayest exercise over us absolute and perpetual dominion. Thus we cherish the firm hope that a day will come when, together with the angel host, we shall, in paradise, salute Thee the *King of our hearts* to enjoy Thy sweet presence for all eternity. Amen.

MAY JESUS AND MARY BE PRAISED
TO-DAY AND FOREVER!

APPENDIX

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF OUR MOST HOLY LORD LEO XIII ON THE CONSECRATION OF MANKIND TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Venerable Brethren
Health and Apostolic Benediction

But a short time ago, as you well know, We, by letters apostolic, and following the custom and ordinances of Our predecessors, commanded the celebration in this city, at no distant date, of a Holy Year. And now to-day, in the hope and with the object that this religious celebration shall be more devoutly performed, We have traced and recommend a striking design from which, if all shall follow it out with hearty good-will, We not unreasonably expect extraordinary and lasting benefits for Christendom in the first place and also for the whole human race.

Already more than once We have endeavored, after the example of Our predecessors, Innocent XII, Benedict XIII, Clement XIII, Pius VI, Pius VII, and Pius IX, devoutly to foster and bring out into fuller light that most excellent form of devotion which has for its object the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: this We did especially by the Decree given on June 28, 1889, by which We raised the Feast under that name to the dignity of the first class.

But now We have in mind a more singular form of

devotion which shall be in a manner the crowning perfection of all the honors that people have been accustomed to pay to the Sacred Heart, and which We confidently trust will be most pleasing to Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer. This is not the first time, however, that the design of which We speak has been mooted. Twenty-five years ago, on the approach of the solemnities of the second centenary of the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque's reception of the divine command to propagate the worship of the Sacred Heart, many letters from all parts, not merely from private persons but from Bishops also, were sent to Pius IX begging that he would consent to consecrate the whole human race to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was thought best at the time to postpone the matter in order that a well-considered decision might be arrived at: meanwhile permission was granted to individual cities which desired it thus to consecrate themselves, and a form of consecration was drawn up. Now, for certain new and additional reasons, We consider that the plan is ripe for fulfillment.

This world-wide and solemn testimony of allegiance and piety is especially appropriate to Jesus Christ, who is the Head and Supreme Lord of the whole human race. His empire extends not only over Catholic nations and those who, having been duly washed in the waters of holy Baptism, belong of right to the Church, although erroneous opinions keep them astray, or dissent from her teachings cuts them off from her care; it comprises also all those who are deprived of the Christian faith, so that the whole human race is truly under the power of Jesus Christ.

For He who is the only-begotten Son of God the Father, having the same substance with Him and being *the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance* (Hebrews i, 3), necessarily has everything in common with the Father, and therefore sovereign power over all things. This is why the Son of God thus speaks of Himself, through the Prophet: *But I am appointed King by him over Sion, his holy mountain. . . . The Lord said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession* (Ps. ii). By these words He declares that He has power from God over the whole Church, which is signified by Mount Sion, and also over the rest of the world to its uttermost ends. On what foundation this sovereign power rests is made sufficiently plain by the words, *Thou art my Son.* For by the very fact that He is the Son of the King of all, He is also the heir of all His Father's power: hence the words—*I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance,* which are similar to those used by Paul the Apostle, *Whom he hath appointed heir to all things.*[1]

But we should now give most especial consideration to the declarations made by Jesus Christ, not through the Apostles or the Prophets, but by His own words. To the Roman Governor who asked Him: *Art thou a king then?* He answered unhesitatingly: *Thou sayest that I am a king.*[2] And the greatness of this power and the boundlessness of His kingdom is still more clearly declared by these words to the Apostles: *All power is given to me in heaven and on*

[1] Heb. I, 2. [2] John XVIII, 37.

earth.[1] If then all power has been given to Christ it follows of necessity that His empire must be supreme, absolute and independent of the will of any other, so that none is either equal or like unto it: and since it has been given in heaven and on earth it ought to have heaven and earth obedient to it.

And verily He has acted on this extraordinary and peculiar right when He commanded His Apostles to preach His doctrine over the earth, to gather all men together into the body of the Church by the baptism of salvation, and to bind them by laws which no one could reject without risking his eternal salvation.

But this is not all. Christ reigns not only by natural right as the Son of God, but also by a right that He has acquired. He it was who snatched us *from the powers of darkness,*[2] and *gave Himself for the redemption of all.*[3] Therefore, not only Catholics, and those who have duly received Christian Baptism, but also all men, individually and collectively, have become to Him *a purchased people.*[4] St. Augustine's words are therefore to the point when he says: *You ask what price He paid? See what He gave and you will understand how much He paid. The price was the blood of Christ. What could cost so much but the whole world, and all its people? The great price He paid was paid for all.*[5]

How it comes about that infidels themselves are subject to the power and dominion of Jesus Christ is clearly shown by St. Thomas, who gives us the reason and its explanation. For having put the

[1] Matth. XXVIII, 18. [2] Col. I, 13. [3] I Tim. II, 6.
[4] I Pet. II, 9. [5] Tract. 120 in Joan.

question whether His judicial power extends to all men, and having stated that judicial authority flows naturally from royal authority, he concludes decisively as follows: *All things are subject to Christ as far as His power is concerned, although they are not all subject to Him in the exercise of that power.*[1] This sovereign power of Christ over men is exercised by truth, justice, and, above all, by charity.

To this twofold ground of His power and domination He graciously allows us, if we think fit, to add voluntary consecration. Jesus Christ, Our God and Our Redeemer, is rich in the fullest and perfect possession of all things: we, on the other hand, are so poor and needy that we have nothing of our own to offer Him as a gift. But yet, in His infinite goodness and love, He in no way objects to our giving and consecrating to Him what is already His, as if it were really our own; nay, far from refusing such an offering, He positively desires it and asks it: *My Son, give me thy heart.* We are, therefore, able to be pleasing to Him by the good-will and the affection of our soul. For by consecrating ourselves to Him we not only declare our open and free acknowledgment and acceptance of His authority over us, but we also testify that if what we offer as a gift were really our own, we would still offer it with our whole heart. We also beg of Him that He would vouchsafe to receive it from us, though clearly His own. Such is the efficacy of the act of which We speak, such is the meaning underlying Our words.

And since there is in the Sacred Heart a symbol and a sensible image of the infinite love of Jesus

[1] 3a P., Q. 59, Art. 4.

Christ which moves us to love one another, therefore it is fit and proper that we should consecrate ourselves to His most Sacred Heart—an act which is nothing else than an offering and a binding oneself to Jesus Christ, seeing that whatever honor, veneration, and love is given to this Divine Heart is really and truly given to Christ Himself.

For these reasons, We urge and exhort all who know and love this Divine Heart willingly to undertake this act of piety; and it is Our earnest desire that all should make it on the same day, so that the aspirations of so many thousands who are performing this act of consecration may be borne to the temple of heaven on the same day.

But shall We allow to slip from Our remembrance those innumerable others upon whom the light of Christian truth has not yet shined? We hold the place of Him who came to save that which was lost, and who shed His blood for the whole human race. And so We greatly desire to bring to the true life those who sit in the shadow of death. As We have already sent messengers of Christ over the earth to instruct them, so now, in pity for their lot, with all Our soul We commend them, and as far as in Us lies We consecrate them to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In this way this act of devotion, which We recommend, will be a blessing to all. For having performed it, those in whose hearts are the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ will feel that faith and love increased. Those who knowing Christ, yet neglect His law and its precepts, may still gain from His Sacred Heart the flame of charity. And lastly, for those still more unfortunate, who are struggling in

the darkness of superstition, we shall all with one mind implore the assistance of Heaven that Jesus Christ, to whose power they are subject, may also one day render them submissive to its exercise: and that not only in the life to come when He will fulfill His will upon all men, by saving some and punishing others,[1] but also in this mortal life by giving them faith and holiness. May they by these virtues strive to honor God as they ought, and to win everlasting happiness in heaven.

Such an act of consecration, since it can establish and draw tighter the bonds which naturally connect public affairs with God, gives to States a hope of better things. In these latter times especially, a policy has been followed which has resulted in a sort of wall being raised between the Church and civil society. In the constitution and administration of States the authority of sacred and divine law is utterly disregarded, with a view to the exclusion of religion having any constant part in public life. This policy almost tends to the removal of the Christian faith from our midst, and, if that were possible, of the banishment of God Himself from the earth. When men's minds are raised to such a height of insolent pride, what wonder is it that the greater part of the human race should have fallen into such disquiet of mind and be buffeted by waves so rough that no one is suffered to be free from anxiety and peril? When religion is once discarded it follows of necessity that the surest foundations of the public welfare must give way, whilst God, to inflict on His enemies the punishment they so richly deserve, has left them the

[1] St. Thomas, *loco citato.*

prey of their own evil desires, so that they give themselves up to their passions and finally wear themselves out by excess of liberty.

Hence that abundance of evils which have now for a long time settled upon the world, and which pressingly call upon us to seek for help from Him by whose strength alone they can be driven away. Who can He be but Jesus Christ the only-begotten Son of God? *For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved.*[1] We must have recourse to Him who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* We have gone astray and we must return to the right path: darkness has overshadowed our minds, and the gloom must be dispelled by the light of truth: death hath seized upon us, and we must lay hold of life. It will at length be possible that our many wounds be healed and all justice spring forth again with the hope of restored authority; that the splendors of peace be renewed and swords and arms drop from the hand when all men shall acknowledge the empire of Christ and willingly obey His word, and *every tongue shall confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.*[2]

When the Church, in the days immediately succeeding her institution, was oppressed beneath the yoke of the Cæsars, a young emperor saw in the heavens a cross, which became at once the happy omen and cause of the glorious victory that soon followed. And now, to-day, behold another blessed and heavenly token is offered to our sight—the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with a cross rising from it and shining forth with dazzling splendor amidst

[1] Acts IV, 12. [2] Phil. II, 11.

flames of love. In that Sacred Heart all our hopes should be placed, and from it the salvation of men is to be confidently besought.

Finally, there is one motive which We are unwilling to pass over in silence, personal to Ourselves it is true, but still good and weighty, which moves Us to undertake this celebration. God, the Author of every good, not long ago preserved Our life by curing Us from a dangerous disease. We now wish, by this increase of the honor paid to the Sacred Heart, that the memory of this great mercy should be brought prominently forward, and Our gratitude be publicly acknowledged.

For these reasons, We ordain that on the ninth, tenth, and eleventh days of the coming month of June, in the principal church of every town and village, certain appointed prayers be said, and on each of these days there be added to the other prayers the Litany of the Sacred Heart approved by Our authority. On the last day the form of consecration shall be recited, which, Venerable Brethren, We send to you with these letters.

As a pledge of divine benefits, and in token of Our paternal benevolence, to you, and to the clergy and people committed to your care, We lovingly grant in the Lord the Apostolic Benediction.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's, on the 25th day of May, 1899, the twenty-second year of Our Pontificate.

LEO PP. XIII

A FORM OF CONSECRATION TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Most sweet Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, look down upon us, most humbly prostrate before Thine altar. Thine we are, Thine we desire to remain; and that we may be the more securely united to Thee, behold each one of us here to-day freely consecrates himself to Thy most Sacred Heart.

Many, indeed, have never known Thee; many, too, have despised Thy commandments and rejected Thee. Have mercy on them all, O most merciful Jesus, and draw them all to Thy most Sacred Heart.

Be thou, O Lord, King not only of the faithful who have never departed from Thee, but also of the prodigal children who have turned their backs upon Thee. Grant that they may return to their Father's house, lest they perish of wretchedness and hunger. Be Thou King of those who have been deceived by error, or whom discord keeps estranged. Bring

them back to the haven of truth and to the unity of faith, that soon there may be one fold and one shepherd. Be Thou King, moreover, of all those who continue in the ancient superstition of the Gentiles. Refuse not to deliver them out of darkness into the light and the kingdom of God.

Grant, O Lord, to Thy Church freedom and security; give peace and order to all nations; make the earth resound from pole to pole with one voice: "Praise to the Divine Heart through which our salvation has been accomplished: to the same be glory and honor forever. Amen."

(*Indulgence: 7 years and 7 quarantines, when said in Church at the annual ceremony of consecration.*)

AN OFFERING TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

My loving Jesus! I (N.N.) give Thee my heart, and I consecrate myself wholly to Thee, out of the grateful love I bear Thee, and as a reparation for all my unfaithfulness; and with Thy aid I purpose never to sin again.

(*Indulgence: 100 days once a day; Plenary Indulgence once a month for daily recitation.*)

LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

LORD, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of heaven,[1]
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God, the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, one God,
Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father,
Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mother,
Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the Word of God,
Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty,
Heart of Jesus, holy temple of God,
Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High,
Heart of Jesus, house of God and Gate of Heaven,
Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity,
Heart of Jesus, sanctuary of justice and love,
Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love,
Heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues,

[1] Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise,[1]
Heart of Jesus, King and Center of all hearts,
Heart of Jesus, in which are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,
Heart of Jesus, in which dwells all the fullness of the Godhead,
Heart of Jesus, in which the Father was well pleased,
Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we all have received,
Heart of Jesus, the desire of the everlasting hills,
Heart of Jesus, patient and full of mercy,
Heart of Jesus, rich to all that call on Thee,
Heart of Jesus, the source of life and holiness,
Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our sins,
Heart of Jesus, filled with reproaches,
Heart of Jesus, bruised for our sins,
Heart of Jesus, obedient even unto death,
Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance,
Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation,
Heart of Jesus, our life and our resurrection,
Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation,
Heart of Jesus, victim for sinners,
Heart of Jesus, salvation of them that hope in Thee,

[1] Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, hope of them that die in Thee,[1]
Heart of Jesus, delight of all the saints,
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.
V. Jesus, meek and humble of heart.
R. Make our hearts like unto Thine.

LET US PRAY

O ALMIGHTY and eternal God, look on the Heart of Thy most beloved Son, and on the praise and satisfaction It renders Thee in the name of sinners, and, being appeased, grant pardon to those that implore Thy mercy in the name of the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

(*Indulgence: 300 days, once a day. Leo XIII, April 2,* 1899.)

[1] Have mercy on us.

LET US PRAY

O God, Who, out of Thy infinite love, hast given to the faithful the most Sacred Heart of Thy beloved Son, Our Lord, as the object of their tender affection; grant that we may so love and honor this pledge of Thy love on earth, as by it to merit the love of both Thee and Thy gift, and be eternally loved by Thee and this most blessed Heart in heaven: through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

LITTLE CHAPLET AND PRAYERS IN HONOR OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

(Usually said at the Monthly Meeting of the Association of the Sacred Heart.)

V. Incline unto mine aid, O God.
R. O Lord, make haste to help me.
V. Glory be to the Father, etc.
R. As it was, etc.

I

My most loving Jesus, when I ponder over Thy most Sacred Heart, all tenderness and sweetness for sinners, then doth my own heart rejoice, and I am filled with the hope

of Thy kind welcome. But, alas, how many and how great are my sins! With Peter and with Magdalene I bewail and abhor them because they are an offense to Thee, my Sovereign Good. Oh! grant me pardon for them all. I pray Thy Sacred Heart that I may rather die than offend Thee again, and may I live alone to love Thee.

Our Father (*once*). Glory be to the Father, etc. (*five times*).

Sweet Heart of Jesus, I implore,
That I may love Thee more and more.

II

My Jesus, I bless Thy most humble Heart; and I give thanks unto Thee Who in making it my model dost urge me with strong pleadings to imitate it, and also, at the cost of so many humiliations, dost vouchsafe Thyself to point out and smooth for me the way to follow Thee. Foolish and ungrateful that I am, how have I wandered far from Thee! Pardon me, O my Jesus! Take away from me all hateful pride and ambition, that with lowly heart I may follow Thee, my Jesus, amidst humiliations, and so gain peace and

salvation Be Thou at hand to strengthen me, and I will ever bless Thy Sacred Heart.

Our Father, etc. Sweet Heart of Jesus, etc.

III

My Jesus, I marvel at Thy most patient Heart, and I give Thee thanks for all the wondrous examples of unwearied patience, which Thou has left us. It grieves me that these examples still have to reproach me for my excessive delicacy, shrinking from every little pain. Pour, then, into my heart, dear Jesus, a fervent and constant love of suffering and the cross of mortification and of penance, that, following Thee to Calvary, I may with Thee attain to glory, and the joys of Paradise.

Our Father, etc. Sweet Heart of Jesus, etc.

IV

Dear Jesus, beside Thy most gentle Heart I set my own, and shudder to see how unlike mine is to Thine. How am I wont to fret and grieve when a hint, a look, or a word thwarts me! Pardon all my excesses, and give me grace for the future to imitate in every

contradiction Thy unalterable meekness, that so I may enjoy an everlasting holy peace.

Our Father, etc. Sweet Heart of Jesus, etc.

V

LET us sing praise to Jesus for His generous Heart, Conqueror of death and hell; for well does it merit every praise. Still more than ever confounded am I, looking upon my cowardly heart, which dreads even a rough word or injurious taunt. But it shall be so with me no more. My Jesus, I pray Thee for such strength that fighting and conquering myself on earth I may one day rejoice triumphantly with Thee in heaven.

Our Father, etc. Sweet Heart of Jesus, etc.

NOW LET US TURN TO MARY; AND DEDICATING OURSELVES YET MORE AND MORE TO HER, AND TRUSTING IN HER MATERNAL HEART, WE SHALL SAY TO HER:

By all the virtue of thy most sweet heart, obtain for me, O great Mother of God, my Mother Mary, a true and enduring devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, thy Son, that bound up in every thought and affection in union with His Heart, I may fulfill each duty

of my state, serving Jesus, the loving King of my heart, ever more with readiness of heart and especially this day.

Heart of Jesus, burning with love of us,
Inflame our hearts with love of Thee.

LET US PRAY

O LORD! we beseech Thee, let Thy Holy Spirit kindle in our hearts that fire of charity which our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, sent forth from His inmost Heart upon this earth, and willed that it should burn exceedingly, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

(Indulgences: 300 days each time, and plenary once a month, on the usual conditions, for daily recital.)

PROMISES MADE BY OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR TO ST. MARGARET MARY IN FAVOR OF THOSE WHO ARE DEVOTED TO HIS SACRED HEART

I WILL give them all the graces necessary for their salvation.

I will give peace in their families.

I will console them in all their troubles.

I will be their assured refuge during life, and especially in death.

I will pour abundant blessings on all their undertakings.

Sinners shall find in My Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.

Tepid souls shall become fervent.

Fervent souls shall be specially elevated to a great perfection.

I will bless the houses where the representation of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honored.

I will give to priests the grace to touch the most hardened hearts.

Those who shall propagate this devotion shall have their names written on My Heart, never to be effaced.

I promise thee in the excess of the mercy of My Heart, that Its all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Communion on the first Friday of every month for nine consecutive months, the grace of final perseverance; and that they shall not die under My displeasure, nor without receiving their sacraments, and My Heart shall be their secure refuge at that last hour.

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